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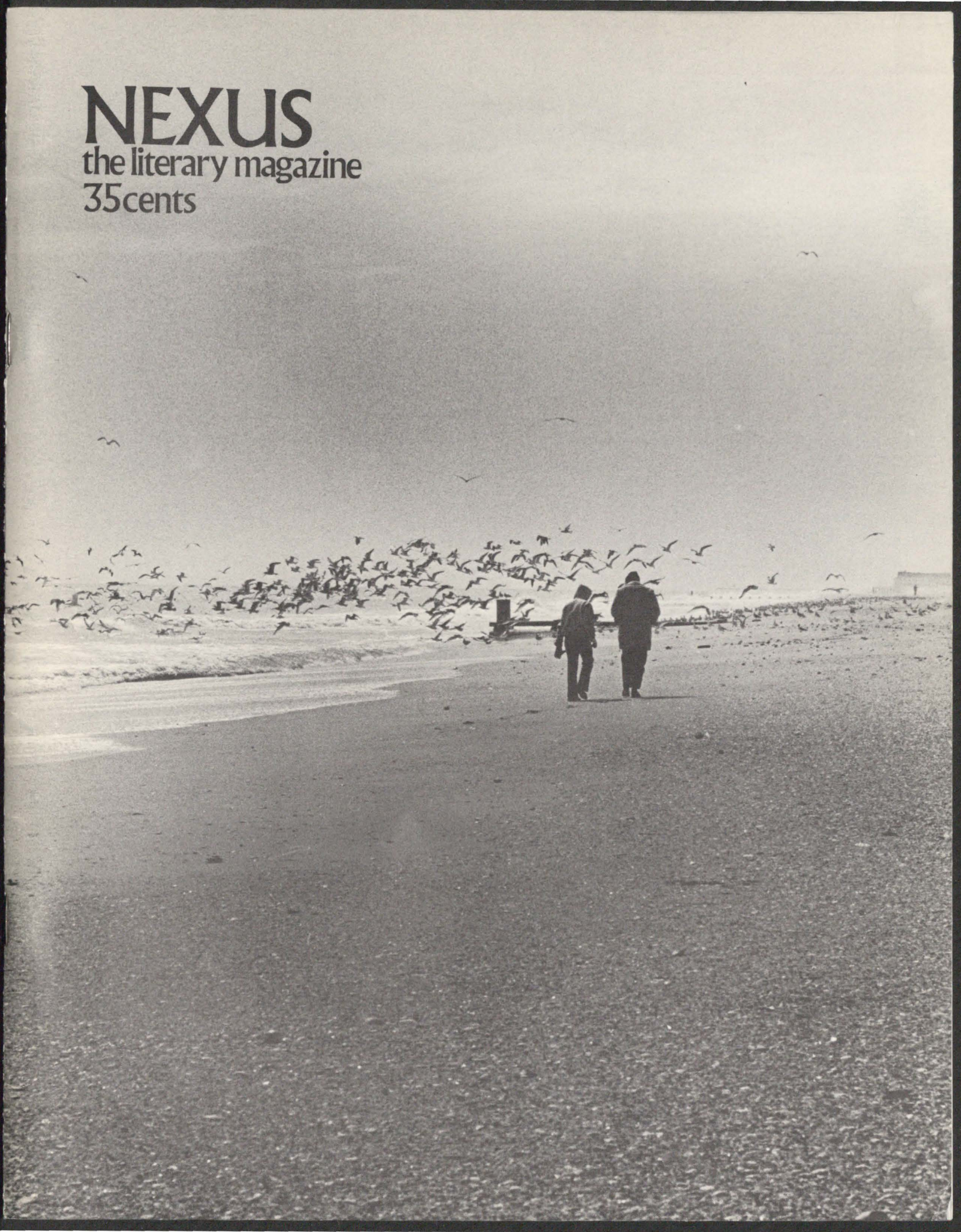
Nexus, 1971

Wright State University Community

NEXUS

the literary magazine

35cents



NEXUS

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It is the pleasure of the Nexus staff to announce that the following sequence of poems is the winners in the poetry division of the Winter quarter creative writing contest.

It is the pleasure of the Nexus staff to announce that the following sequence of short stories is the winners in the short story division of the Winter quarter creative writing contest.

Voices from the Water

Bruce Bass

On the windbank
among the country
I stand

thick weeds
under sunlight
and trees green-brown
at the lakeside

the water placid
awaiting the repetition of a signal

from the stonebank
I watch from
the waterline I listen
waiting

there is a powerful odor yet delicate
of wetness in constant shade
below the trees

the worms house
exquisitely sensitive to light
beneath

no one anywhere in sight
the water is heavily silent and the
land fragrant
within its boundaries

for sure
no fever has laid its touch to this country
black so black
rich and fine
fresh so fresh
the earth

my eyes to the shallow basin
floored with dead oak leaves shored up
with slime wood

the water
slack and faintly sad

there is a stone that begs to be thrown into
this quiet window and so
cleanly it flies
following a blue-print path
up
over
descending
to the lyric water
the silent moon-face

descending
now slicing into
the gliding water membrane
the circles the vibrations
outward bound
violations of geometric happiness

and I from the stonebank
watching from the waterline
listening
waiting
in some distance rolling thunder
the eagle has landed

now with mystic speed
down the darkness
and the wind breathing heavy
so heavy
the trees sway like rooted waves
all upon me the rustling rain
a trillion leaves stirring in this phantom storm

knee deep in swollen water
I cry for release
and from my chest the blooming of
some spring
sending to my leaf-hands life-blood
swelling the vessels and stems

with the same quickness
there is a windless
standing forth of quiet again
no motion just
perhaps
compulsion quiet compulsion
and
reverence

On the windbank
among the country
I stand

thick weeds
under sunlight
and trees green-brown
and the lakeside

the water placid
awaiting the repetition of a signal

and somewhere below
in moss-fields
lie stones plotting

and I on the windbank
right arm tingling
hear voices from the water.

February, 1972 in the Caf or Thank You Alexander Graham Bell you bastard!

by Stuart Ehrlich

Dear Mom & Dad,
Today Gabby Hayes took time out from riding the trails through the west with Hoppalong Cassidy and came to read poetry in my class.
No I am *not* picking my nose
And yes I am wearing nice clothes to school my very best.
(Ear wax on my jeans My God! Ear wax—And the same shirt as yesterday—)
Yes mother I am eating good food and dressing warm
(Hey, let go of my arm. Get dressed huh?)

Ring . . . Ring . . . Ri. Hello Dad?
Here, talk to your mother.
Mom?
You're wearing yesterday's shirt. I know you are.
Pig! Animal!
I raised a pig.
Irving—Come talk to your son-the-pig.
He's not my son Sylvia—not anymore.
Look at him, Jesus Christ!
He looks like Jesus Christ.
I can't even kiss him hello.
I can't find him under all that hair.
That hair! He's not my son Sylvia.
You'd never believe two years ago it was My-Son-the-DOCTOR
Now I'm a nose picker. What next? What next?

Hey listen, uh . . . I have to go, okay? I'll speak to you next week. Yeah. My nose just fell off.
Irving he's picking his nose. He's . . .

Click!

Holden Caulfield
The P.T.A. and The Old Scarlet and The Grey

Robert Folsom

What ever happened to old Holden Caulfield?
Who was always puking
About things that didn't seem to be right.
Old J.D. Salinger
Made a million because of him
He really did.

Old J.D. just frittered away
And old Holden kept right on living
And chucking the crap around
He's 20 years older
For heaven's sake.

Right out of college
He married old Sally Hayes
Whom he didn't like very much
I swear to the gods
He must have been outta his gourd.

I first heard about old Holden
When the P.T.A. started raising hell.
I asked my kids
If their old English Lit. teacher
Made them read that bad-awful book.
Yeah, they said, big deal
We had to do a book report on it.
It was kinda icky goo
Or something like that
I didn't understand them
I never did.

I went right down to the P.T.A. meeting
On Wednesday night
The meeting is on Wednesday night
So all the Christians
Can skip Wednesday night prayer meeting
For Pete's sake.

A mucklemouth school teacher
Gave me a cup of coffee
That the kids wouldn't drink
With their farm surplus free lunch
No wonder these old bitties
Are so bitter
I nearly puked it up
It was so bad
It really was.

God, How they hated old J.D. Salinger
But their real wrath
Was at old Holden Caulfield
that foul mouth kid
And I ain't kidding.

A history teacher
That the kids didn't like anyway
Said,
Old J.D. Salinger must have
Escaped from Hades, like Sisyphus,
Rolling a rock uphill
And having it roll back again
Was too good for him.

The old bitty kinda went over my head
On that one.
I looked around at the school board
And they were all smiles and nodding their bald heads
Like they knew what she was talking about
That killed me
It really did.

I knew those old phonies
The board president dropped out
In the eighth grade.
Old Joe, John, Thackery and
Gooser Mc. Cann, vice prez
Graduated with me in "33"
Because we cabbaged the answer key
To the finals
Right out of the principals safe.
He nearly died.

After the test
Old Annie Kanouse English Lit. III
With big tears in her eyes
Said, Gary,
I'm so proud of you
I really am.
All the time you were sleeping
And cutting class
And reading that trashy
Police Gazette
And spending so much time in the boy's room
You were actually learning Lit. III.
That broke me up
It really did.
Because when she thought I was sleeping
I was really looking up her dress.
And I wasn't spending all that time in the boy's room
I was in the #1 boiler room
Because old Prissey Dugan said,
Any boy caught playing with himself in the boy's room
Would have to come up to his office
And he would call in your mother and father
That would hurt
He knew it would.

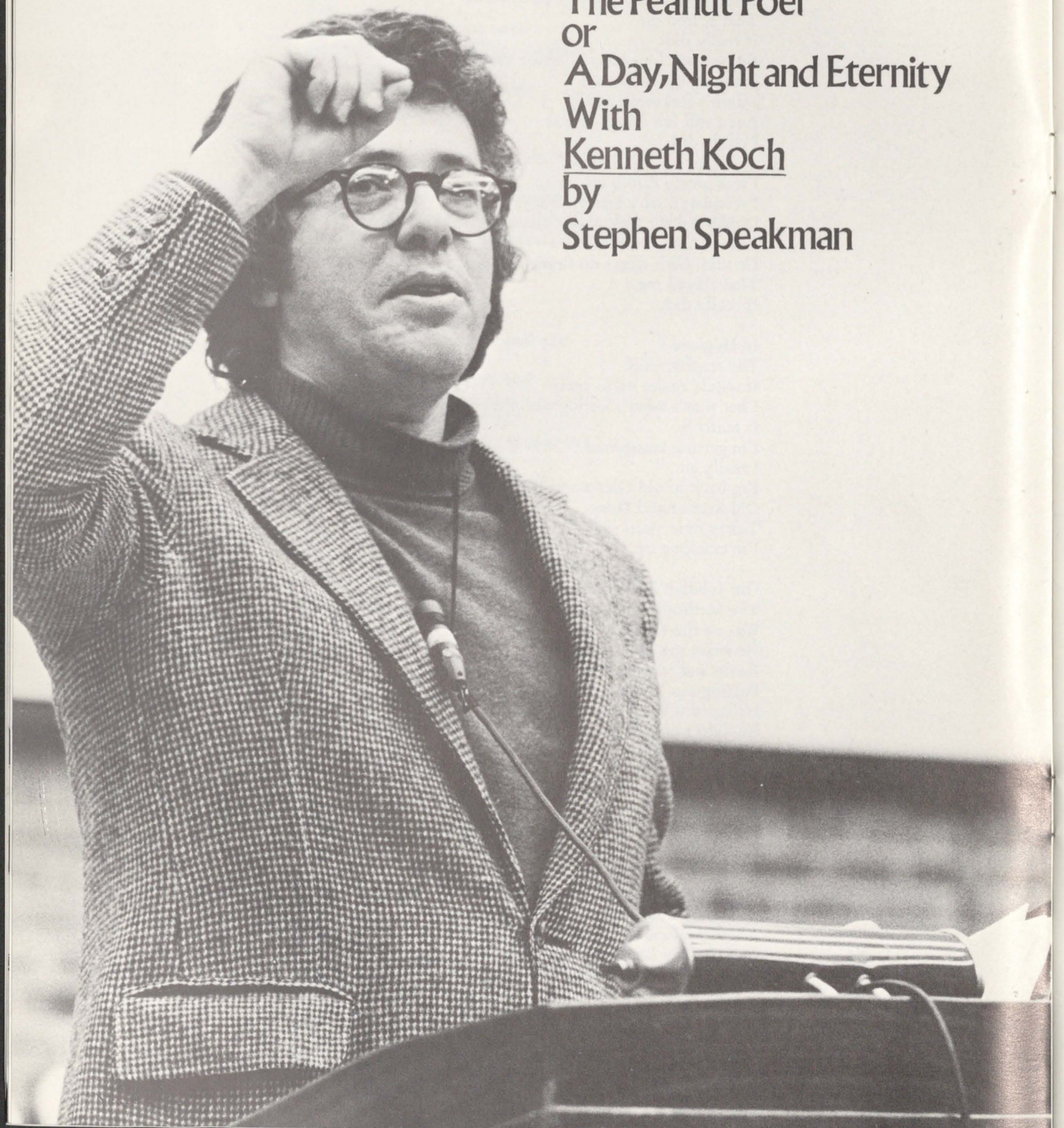
The coach said, it would weaken you down
And you couldn't play good football
That scared me
It really did.
But when I looked at all those chearleaders
Jumping up and down
I didn't feel weak at all.
But I still felt kinda putrid
I really did.

I was pretty dumb about sex
I wondered why Prissey Dugan
Didn't tell the girls about playing with themselves.
I asked him.
He said, Girls don't do things like that.
That slayed me
It really did.

In Hygiene I
The teacher said,
It would make us go crazy
I bet that's what's wrong with me
It really is.
I'm getting emotional
I really am.
I'm back in old Glenwood High.
Old Scarlet and Grey
Thirty-nine years ago
I'm cracking up.

Old Jebdiah Zebulon Cooper
The Methodist preacher
Was on the floor
He woke me up
Ravin and rantin about that sinful book
Putting our kids on the road to hell
He layed it on thick
He didn't crap around.

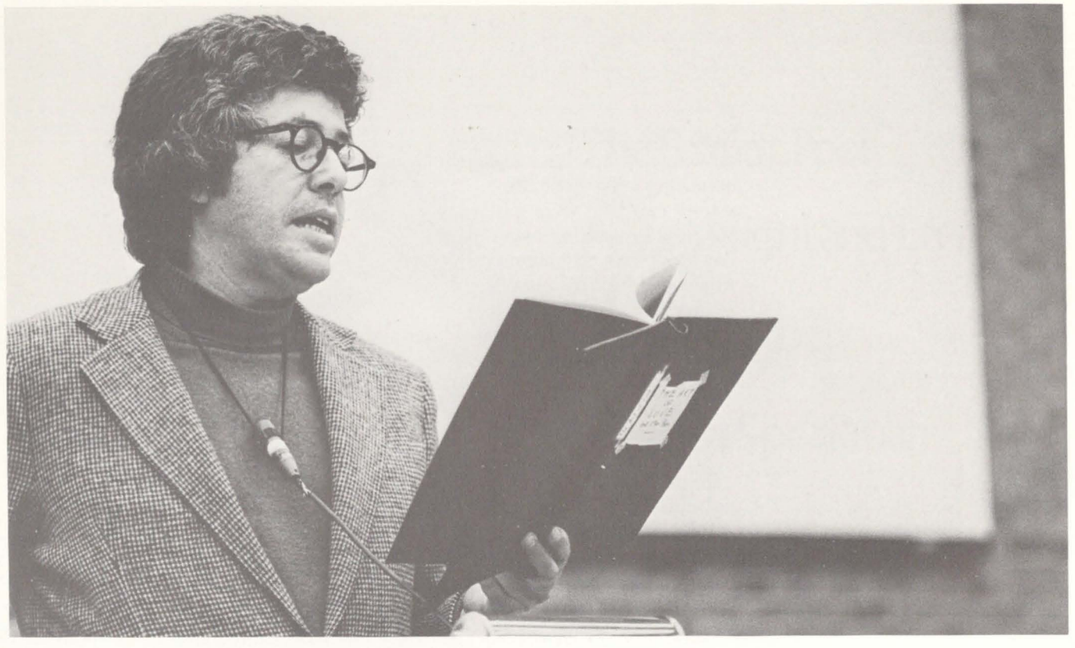
I felt like getting up and defending old Holden Caulfield
But I didn't.
And there wasn't much I could say for old J.D. Salinger.
He betrayed us for a few lousy bucks.
The "Catcher In The Rye"
Sounded more like me, than old Holden.
I didn't know old Prissey Dugan
Was going out and blab all over the place
About my school record
And the day he caught me in boiler room #1
I really didn't.



The Peanut Poet or A Day, Night and Eternity With Kenneth Koch by Stephen Speakman

I)
New York came in on Dayton
on wings of fame and a slightly large bottom
breathing what little life
into poems that were yesterday's reason
but now something to get over.
Let us all turn to Mammon,
where children are taught to write
as they already know how.
And over so many pitchers of beer and peanuts,
we few heard the hound drool on the stag's foot.
  "If I were a little Greek boy,
  my hero would be Hercules."
and more peanuts
  "Only fifty percent of what poets say
  about their poetry is valid."
and somewhat more peanuts
  "The critics don't understand my poetry;
  it's serious and humorous."
and peanuts and peanuts.
Then after his reading and after his lecture
and after his movie
and after a fashion,
he got tired—
but not of peanuts.

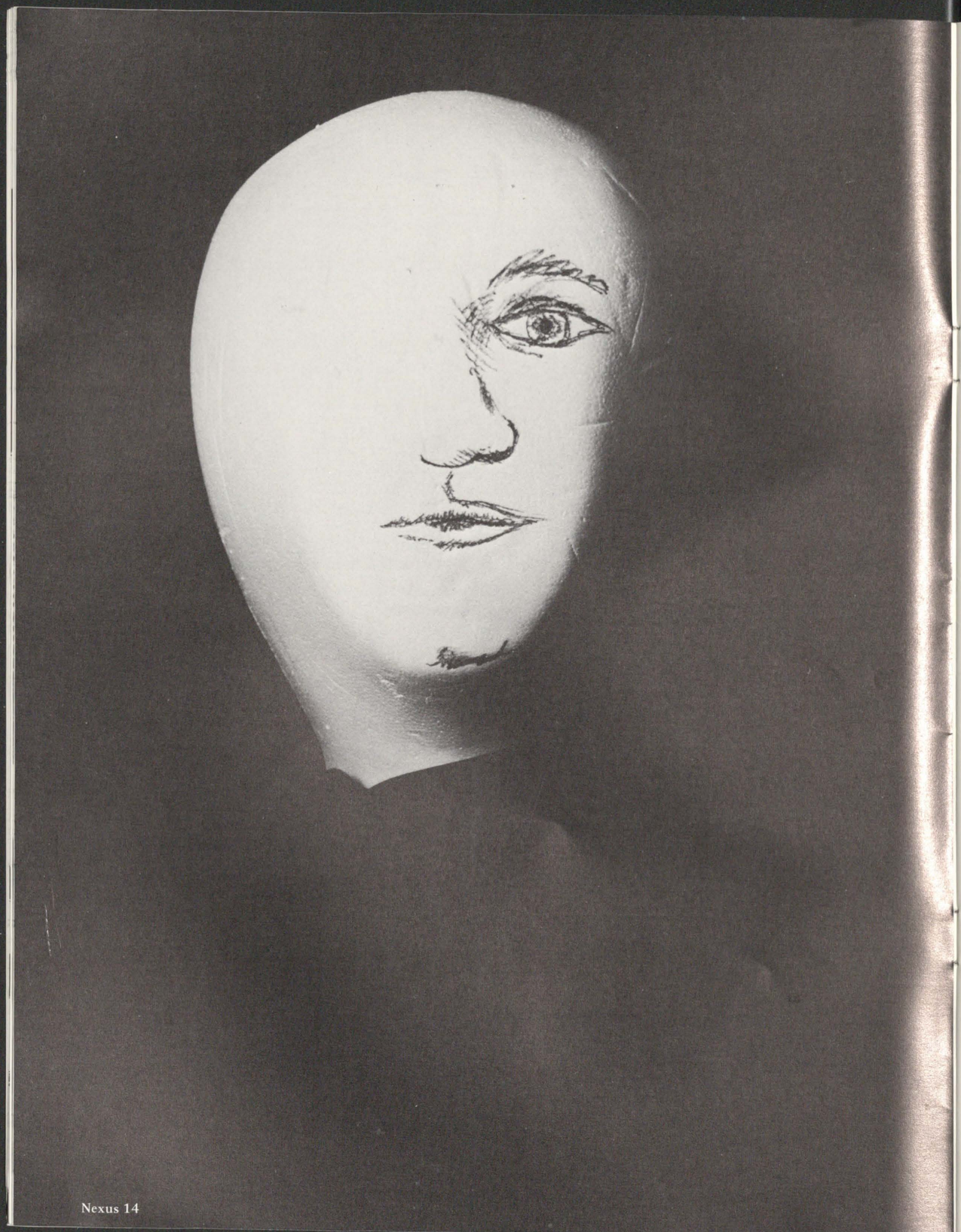
II)
Tuck him safely in a car for Springfield
with his suitcase and his books,
with his poetry
and his peanuts.
Put it all together, it spells mother:
she was there.
  "Kenneth, you lie down in back."
  "Mother, you let Laura drive."
  "Honey, both hands on the wheel."
  "Mother, you let Laura drive."
  "Aren't we running awfully late?"
  "Mother, I've got lots of time."
  "I've been to Springfield a thousand times."
  "Mother, you let Laura drive."
Highway 40 got lost but was finally found
disguised as a strip of asphalt.
  "I've only been to Dayton once."
  "Kenneth, I had kidney stones."
  "I was going in the Army."
  "I hope you don't get kidney stones."
Highway 40 got lost again,
taking the shortest route to dinner.



III)
Dinner was on his tab and insistence,
fried shrimp,
each bite chewed twenty times;
everyone else was chewed-out quicker.
"Waitress! Oh god! This wine is chilled."
"All our larger bottles are."
"It's like asking for a steak that isn't burned."
"I'll see about our smaller bottles."
The man at the next table
surely ate there often
because he glared at
the poet who swore at his mother
and had misplaced Highway 40.

IV)
Drinks and wine
and fish and more drinks
and
"Those kids you teach, are they now poets?"
"They show signs they'll be someday—maybe."
"What happened to artistic tension?"
"I see your point but it doesn't matter."
"Wittenberg is just up ahead."

V)
After it was over, there was nothing
but to creep home,
wounded worshippers.
"Now don't write things nasty."
"Do you think it's his mother?"
"We can't write things nasty."
"Do you think it's his poetry?"
"Do you think it is poetry?"
"Do you think we'll write nasty."
(Will bread-mold cure cancer?
Will Man ever know these things?)
We sulked into more beers and no more peanuts.
We'd expected a poet,
but we got
this famous guy and his mother.



Face

by Stuart Ehrlich

It won't be long now. I can feel it. My hands and . . . that's it. A little more clay. Ah, my dream, soon reality. I feel you coming to life. You will breathe. A little more. A soft curve upward. The Grecian nose. Oh, I know it so well. The eyes. To illuminate. Damn you, give me power now. The sweat glistens on my hands. My hands. Strong fingers. Work. Mold. Open to life. Up. More texture, more. Texture. Texture. Oh no, no. If you can't live, die. Die.

So hard. I've worked so hard to create it, and now . . . Now I feel the desire to slash at it with the knife, to watch the keen edge burrow deeply across the eyes tearing at the sockets. I am mad with the want to caress the still moist clay and pound and crush it into total oblivion. I will not rest until it is ruined forever.

It's done. Foul murderer. Demon ghoul of hell. I can feel you eating away at me. You are not giving me the time I need. You drain my power leaving my fingers numb. Please, dear God, let me finish. I must create it.

Look at the way I'm shaking. I won't be able to go back to work now. Not now. I feel my body crying for sleep but there is no rest. It brings me her face. The face I must have. It must be mine. Her features, so perfect. So radiant her eyes. The nostrils flared in a silent fury. The soft curve of her cheek and the warm hollow of her neck. It is there to own, to possess completely. It is there. I have seen it so many times. I can bring her to life, if only, if only my hands will let me. I am smart enough to realize that I will not have my ability much longer. I feel the power draining from my fingers. It is leaving, first quick and then slow. My desire remains. I must have her.

It's been so long now. This room has been my world. It was here that I first saw her. Here, in a dream. Her shroud was a mist. She cuddled against it and it framed her features, her face, her neck. I knew her then. I know her now. I'll find her soon.

Look at the travesty of beauty on the table. So close. Lifeless now. How many times have I destroyed her? How may pseudo lives has she lived?

The sun is up. It brings me no refreshment. It used to. I must go out for a bite of food and then to work. So shallow, so empty. Lifeless and cold without her.

And now the people. The unknowing and uncaring. The sluts on the street. How unlike my dream. The coldness of their eyes tells their story.

Work, yes work. Here my horror is revealed. It's so funny. I have to smile. The wire to the terminal to the hole, three over. The wire to the terminal to the hole, three over. The wire to the terminal to the hole, three over. The wire to the terminal to . . . Don't they know I am a man? How dare they pick away at my life piece by piece.

Home now only to the mis-shaped beast in the center of the room. Can life truly come from the bleakness here?

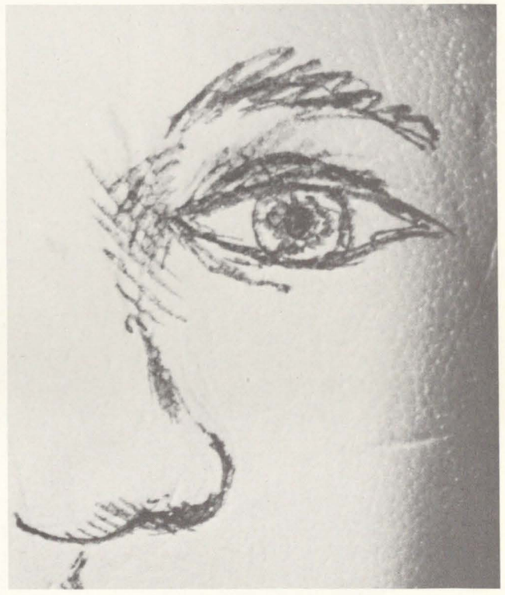
I'll relax first. A drink. Yes. Damn its overflowed on my fingers. Fingers so stiff from work, so tired. The alcohol burns the imprints of wires and terminals out of my hands. It cleanses and washes away the assembly line. Day after day the wire to the terminal to the hole, three over. My fingers still twitch in the horror. Another drink and . . . oh, damn, the glass fell, shattered. Clumsy, fool!

Look at the way the fading sunlight is reflected by the broken glass. The lines, so sharp, so precise. So many lines. So many shapes. The room is filled with them. A sharp line here and then softening to a curve. Could I . . . yes, yes, oh yes. Here, here in the room all the lines I need. They're all here. Here for her. I've been blind, stupid. I must try again. Now!

It is happening. It's taking shape. This is the simple part. The test comes later. The moon is up. Tonight it sparkles. I must follow the lines of the room. She will soon be here. I can feel the sweat of anticipation, icy cold across my head. Follow the lines, follow. Mold and shape. Mold. A slight twist here. Hollow here. Move with purpose, there aren't many moves left to these hands. Not too fast. Soon.

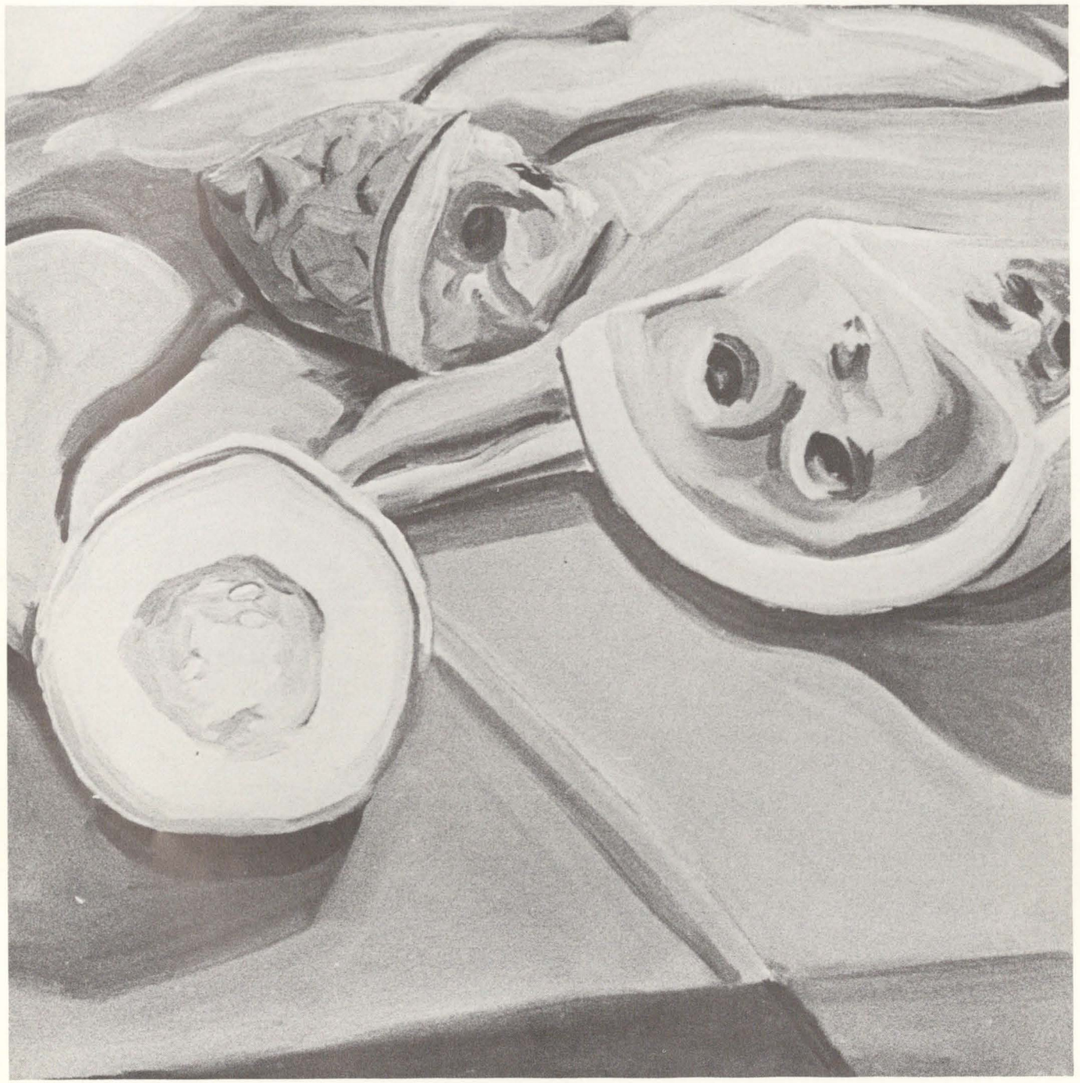
Both hands working now. Working. Consumed in a silent frenzy. They move in and out. Pinching, pinching and kneading. A twist here. Soon. I feel the palet knife in my hand. It moves by itself. The answer was always here. Here and in my hands. It twists and sways, pirouetting in my grasp. It is art. Splendid, glorious art and all for her. My hands working together now, showing my skill.

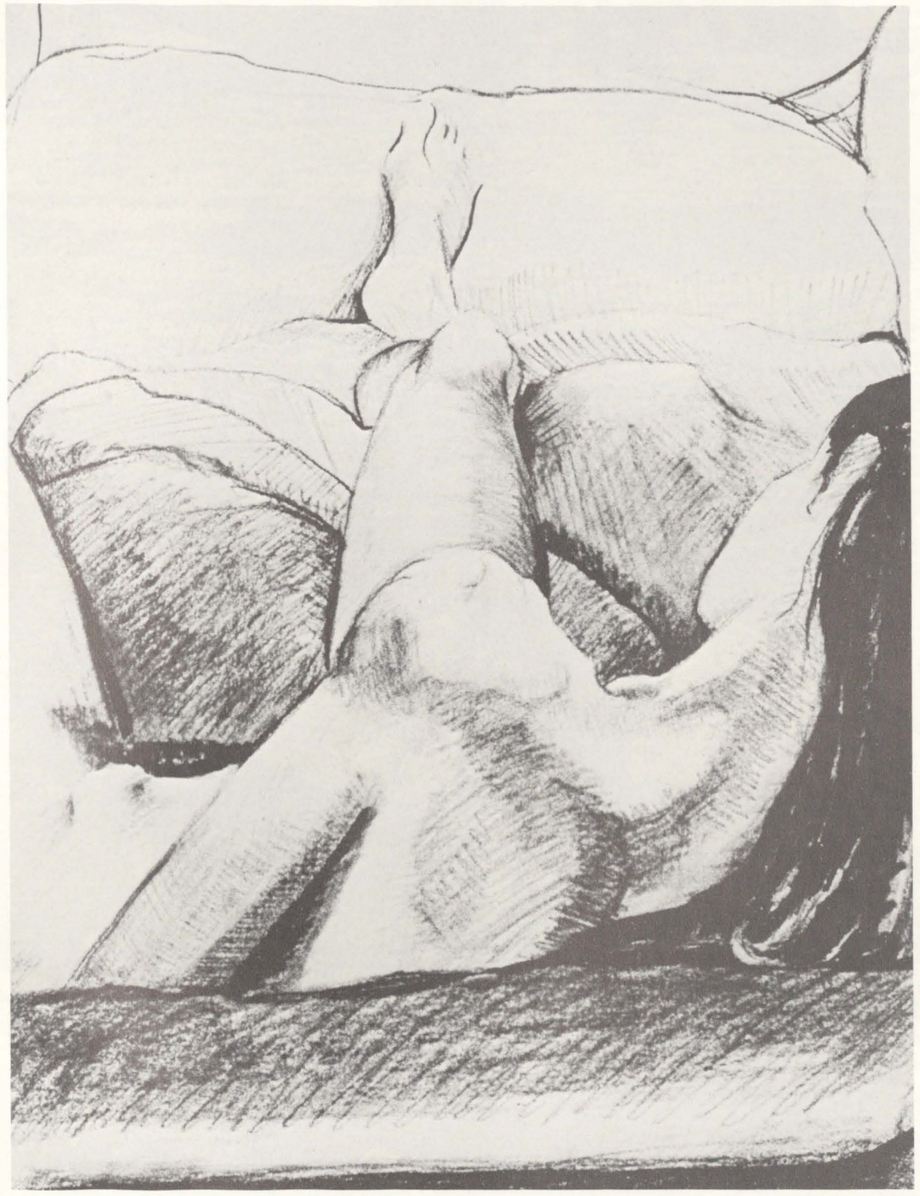
She is close . . . closer . . . but still no sparkle. No aura of life incases her features. Can't stop. A twist of the knife. I have the power. A pinch now. Follow the line. My knife reaches the soft hollow of her neck as does my wrist. The first drop of blood falls upon my love. I work it in quickly, almost afraid of losing it. The cut is very deep. More comes, almost too fast. I work faster and faster. And now the life takes place. The spark is ignited, priceless beauty comes. The clay is now a deep, rich, pulsating red, as are the table and tools. I watch the life shine on me from my love, outshining the sun already gazing in on my drained body.



GALLERY

Jim Slouffman





Cape May

by Stephen Speakman

I) Ritual

The last hurricane's boardwalk rubble stands,
exuding summer surprises like today's water moccasin
that slid treadless along the dry sand,
aggravated by the slipping and
the senior choir's singing,
"Snake! Snake!"
I thought in tenor.
The icons of the day: a stick
to place behind his head, a flattened rock
to smash it.
Down rock!
Soft sand!
Up rock!
Jaws alive and wide and
spitting enough pearl colors to silence
all thoughts of death—for a moment,
the white of wedding lace and Divine mucus.
Down rock.
Jaw crack.
Up rock.
A white forever wide transformed into
an award-winning angel with a halo of its own blood.
The fear of being human tossed it
onto the pile of spintered boards
so gulls could pick the eyes and
rats beneath the pile could wait,
half martialed,
to outlive the sun.

II) Interlude In a Good Humor

From my porch two stories up,
I see the sun start home ragged,
windburned,
daubed by some cumulus doing intership in Heaven.
I think the sun might stop
and rest on the old Coast Guard tower,
  the old-grey-dead Coast Guard tower
  with its grey-dead boards across the door,
  a memorial to the grey-dead Coast Guard.
But no, the sun goes on
to keep a standing date with the horizon,
way, out, as far as I can see
from my porch two stories up—
I think it's Spain.

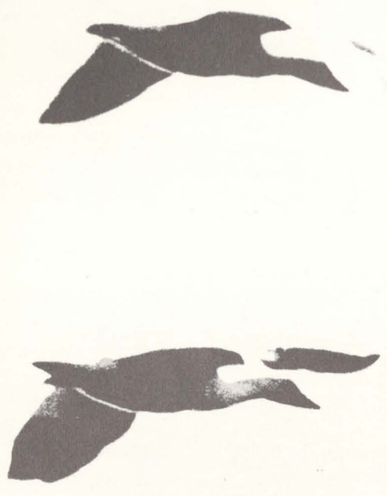
III) Ritual Revisited

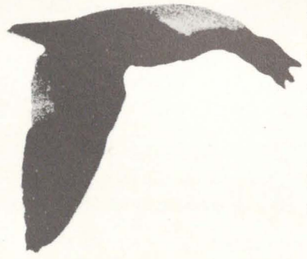
With the sun, the old beach dies.
The gulls are gone,
the waves are muted;
even the stench of salted algae must be searched for.
But down where the boardwalk still stands,
I smell the carmel corn-spanish peanuts-fresh flounder,
altogether;
I see the lights of the Ferris wheel,
an electric-mobius journey;
and, ever so faintly, I hear the Grand Pier's music,
some couple is winning the statue waltz.
And under the boards, no doubt,
some boy is coming of age
with the thirty-four year old witch who taught us all
to love the living Coast Guard and
fear the next hurricane.

Dickinson and Yeats: For the Birds

by James M. Hughes

A Skylark wounded in the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing.
William Blake





In 1958, when I was teaching a make-up high school English literature course at a Boston settlement house, my faith in the flights of poetic song received a shattering blow. The blow came in the form of a switch-blade waved by a departing dissident who shouted: "Poetry's for the birds!" Of course! But not as he meant it. He was using the phrase as he had heard it and did not know its specific lineage: closely related to disgusted Bronx cheers and possibly assuming, linguistically, and association with crazy people, old people, homosexuals, girls and other un-American, non-masculine "birds" satisfied with the weakest seed for their paltry survival.

But today, reading in the *New York Times Magazine* of December 12, 1971, I was reminded anew of that rather desperate remark. For I read in David Zimmerman's article that there is fairly wide-spread "belief that the songbirds may be declining." If there are no birds what can poetry be for?

Remembering has a way of extending itself. I recall a family dispute concerning whether or not we would buy a bird. My grandmother spoke against the idea but spoke for the birds: "Birds are better left free, or in poetry." We did not buy the bird.

Between the Boston drop-out and my grandmother there is a long flight of time, sensibility and wonder. But there must be an unintentional agreement: poetry must be for birds and birds must be for poetry. Even Emily Dickinson and William Butler Yeats, themselves so far apart, agree.

I. "Birds are better left free, or in poetry."

In 1914, William Butler Yeats' poem, "The Three Hermits," outlined the special responsibility as well as the special plight of the poet in the modern world. "Giddy with his hundredth year" the third hermit "sang unnoticed like a bird."[1] The other two hermits pray, rammage for fleas, and philosophize the meaning of life. They do not notice the song their companion sings; they are too busy. They are, it seems, too busy discussing the ways and means of grace while what may be salvation itself sings "unnoticed like a bird." Yeats appears to suggest the free privacy of the act of poetic creation. The freedom of such privacy may be the poet's only consolation in a world too busy to notice him.

Similarly, in 1862 Emily Dickinson wrote her friends Dr. and Mrs. Holland, expressing her concern for their well-being. She apologized for what no doubt seemed so extravagant a care:

Perhaps you laught at me! Perhaps the whole United States are laughing at me too! I can't stop for that! My business is to love. I found a bird, this morning, down–down–on a little bush at the foot of the garden, and and wherefore sing, I said, since nobody hears?

One sob in the throat, one flutter of bosom– "My business is to sing"–and away she rose! How do I know but cherubim, once, themselves, as patient, listened, and applauded her unnoticed hymn?[2]

In this Dickinson letter the bird, its business stated, actually does fly away freely. Emily Dickinson uses the bird in a way that suggests not only the integrity of the poet's business regardless of notice but the free remoteness of the poet's letters of affection. Disdaining publication, Dickinson's comparison has a literal validity. In Yeats the significance is figurative; the poem is published and noticed in that sense but its meaning suggests that Yeats believed that the meanings of these publications were ignored.

Identifying with birds, Dickinson spurns the world of fame, that "fickle food/Upon a shifting plate:"

Whose crumbs the crows inspect
And with ironic caw
Flap past it to the
Farmer's Corn–
Men eat of it and die.[3]

Dickinson indicates the fatality involved in courting an unworthy world's notice; a worthy world *would* notice.

What it does not notice, the world is not likely to reward. Yeats asserts that poetic creation is its own reward:

What's riches to him
That has made a great peacock
With pride of his eye?
The wind-beaten, stone-grey,
And desolate Three beck
Would nourish his whim.
Live he or die
Amid wet rocks and heather,
His ghost will be gay
Adding feather to feather
For the pride of his eye.[4]

Both Dickinson and Yeats, then, see the creative act as spontaneous, self-contained and free. They both see this act and these qualities in terms of birds.

Both Dickinson and Yeats were luckily able to know birds first-hand. The unfeeling business of their worlds had not yet polluted the atmosphere of Amherst or Gregory's Wood. In 1852, when twenty-one, Dickinson described birds to her friend Jane Humphrey: "They filled the air with such melody and song so deliciously . . . I did not want to fly away and be a Robin, too."[5] Nine years later, in a letter to young cousins, she says: "I have one new bird and several trees of old ones."[6] How many have we? If we have few, can we believe that they have merely flown freely away? In his *Reveries of Childhood and Youth,* Yeats remembers "what birds cried out at night as if in their sleep."[7] Perhaps the birds dreamed of their fate, if not ours. Yeats also recalls searching for birds:

Once when staying with my uncle at Rosses Point where he went for certain months of the year, I called upon a cousin towards midnight and asked him to get his yacht out, for I wanted to find what sea birds began to stir before dawn.[8]

At least Yeats found them; at least they were still there to be found.

When found, the bird achieved a special significance for each poet. Thus Yeats recalls his sister awaking, "dreaming that she held a wingless sea-bird in her arms and presently she heard that my uncle had died . . . for a sea-bird is the omen that announces the death or danger of a Pollexfen."[9] Later, in *A Vision*, Yeats mentions "Knowing from the smell of burnt feathers that one of [his] children would be ill."[10] Family tradition directed the significance the bird attained for Yeats. Dickinson saw her own significances. Recalling her mother's death, Dickinson acknowledges the special meaning she saw in gifts:

The last token but one, on which her dear Eyes looked, was the Grapes from You. The very last, a little Bird, from thoughful Mrs. Hills.

Grapes and Birds, how typic, for was she not on her sweet way to a frostless land?[11]

When we can no longer find birds, will we become less aware of the death or danger of others? Will it then be more difficult to imagine a "frostless land"?

It is no wonder that Yeats could say "all my religious emotions were, I think, connected with clouds and cloudy glimpses of luminous sky,"[12] for the bird was not only an image of the poetic function, but a guide to mystic or tropic regions. The guide is immediately available. Or, rather, it was. Announcing in a letter that she "was writing with the Robins," Dickinson went on to say: "They are writing *now* their Desk is every passing Tree."[13] It is this *now*, this passing, whether of free, lonely cloud or charred feather, of time or death, which are the subjects of poetry; the poems are sung on the wings of soaring, yet earthbound birds. But, however much of the earth, the bird seems as well so much toward what is not the earth.

The flight's goal is free to all. It is Dickinson's "morn by men unseen" where "are the birds that sought the sun."[14] It is a place like Yeats' Byzantium where a golden bird is "set upon a golden bough to sing" very noticeably indeed "Of what is past, or passing, or to come."[15]

Each bird-poet recognizes his destiny to sing of such destinations.

'When she was go,' My Mother sang,
'I heard a sea-mew cry,
And saw a flake of the yellow foam
That dropped upon my thigh.'

How therefore could she help but braid
The gold into my hair,
And dream that I should carry
The golden top of care?[16]

Yeats suggests the poet's special awareness of the world that will so carelessly ignore this awareness. Dickinson suggests that birds themselves have this awareness of a season, of an Indian Summer.

These are the days when Birds come back–
A very few–a Bird or two–
To take a backward look.[17]

How few indeed in a world where it is urged that all make clean breaks with the past! The sense of being one of the few and the sensitivity to the past as well as the future that is involved with this aware isolation are painful. Unable to understand why, the poet yet feels she will understand.

Why Birds, a Summer morning
Before the Quick of Day
Should stab my ravished Spirit
With Dirks of Melody
Is part of an inquiry
That will receive reply
When Flesh and Spirit Sunder
In Death's Immediately–[18]

Few dare the agony of feeling associated with so singular an inquiry. Some even consider backward looks irrelevant. But was it only yesterday that it was important to "tell each other how we sung/To keep the Dark away"?[19] Yesterday, too,

Some knew what ailed the world
But never said a thing.
So I have picked a better trade
And night and morning sing.[20]

It may at least and at last be a freer trade even as it becomes a secret one.

Poetry is the trade of catching birds even as they remain free. Inspired by the spiritual example of the bird's rising freedom, both Yeats and Dickinson caught images of that example in their writings. But birds have traditionally been caught by poets in this free manner. Why bring it up again? Perhaps I am reacting to that pattern outlined by Spengler, that pattern which claims that we become self-conscious about the obvious only when the obvious is threatened and it is too late to do anything to save it. If birds are, in fact, so doomed, poetry may not be far behind. So we form *ad hoc* committees to write saving rock lyrics. But, to borrow the title of Rebecca West's historical novel of death and generational change, 'the birds fall down' anyway.

II. "Poetry's for the birds!"

It is said that in the South Pacific the effects of atomic testing at Bikini have driven one species of bird literally underground. There the survivors burrow in the sand instead of flying.

It is one thing to take unnoticed flights of song; it is quite something else to bury oneself or discover oneself buried. In either case, no longer able to fly, one's song would be quite changed. There is even little consolation in concluding, "Say, we've been noticed after all!" if that notice has been destructive. Whatever, by choice or by necessity, many of today's poets resemble the legendary Upupa or Hoopoe bird: "it lines its nest with human dung . . . feeds on stinking excrement . . . lives on this in graves"; furthermore, the effects of such a bird are equally upsetting: its blood, smeared on the body of a human being will cause "nightmares about suffocating devils."[21]

People who do not like poetry or birds and can see no positive connection between the two may in fact be suffocating those who do. Perhaps there are forces in the modern world which are newly and more efficiently caging the spirit of man; but does a song about the cage free the bird so confined?

If the cage is death deified into the coldest of all deities, technology, and if the cage deludes its captive by its attractively advertised life support system (necessary only because the natural balance has been upset), what may the poet sing? Is it not irresponsible, so caged, to ignore the captor, to sing on unnoticed? But what if the subtleties of the caging are such that the caging becomes itself a staging where songs of protest are at once noted, rewarded and ignored? The business of such singing may be big business indeed.

The dilemma of our time may well be the fact that the decreasing number of viable species of birds parallels symbolically the decreasing number of options open to our increasingly caged or clipped or banded spirits.

It may be left only to sing of doom. It was after all Cassandra's best song, and swan songs are usually graceful exits for suicidal civilizations.

At least one can try to avoid the dung. One's last nest may even be feathered by snatches from old songs. The poet may be, finally

Magnaminous as Bird
By Boy descried–
Singing unto the Stone
Of which it died–[22]

But Dickinson's noble pose would be useless if, like the swan, the poet has lost his voice.

These organs of singing, which are so largely developed in the swan, were they always useless? Did they never disport themselves in happy freedom when enjoying a more genial atmosphere? . . . The swan, driven back to the North, . . . has sacrificed his song, has gained the accent of barbarism, or became voiceless. The Muse is dead; the bird has survived.[23]

But the song, like some mythical birds, may come back. Dickinson asked about such a bird:

I knew a Bird that would sing as firm in the centre of Dissolution, as in its Father's nest–
Phoenix, or the Robin?[24]

Yeats would answer phoenix, "that most lonely thing" who possessed "the simplicity of a child" and had that "proud look as though she had gazed into the burning sun."[25]

Perhaps all species of birds, like legions of phoenixes, are simply waiting for us to leave before they return. Loren Eiseley noticed such birds sweeping freely and masterfully over the quiet, early dawn New York streets; he considered their silent flight a judgment:

At this hour the city was theirs, and quietly, without the brush of a single wing tip against stone in that high, eerie place, they were taking over the spires of Manhatten.[26]

Until the quiet peace of early dawn outlasts the day itself, until men's busy noises no longer frighten birds away, the poet, like Dickinson's bobolink "complements existence/ Until allured away."[27]

Such a complement, bird and poem, indicates civilization, that uneasy balance between nature and man, free flight and artificial order. Yeats saw the force of imbalance:

A civilization is a struggle to keep self-control–the loss of control over thought comes toward the end; first a sinking in upon the moral being, then the last surrender, the irrational cry, revelation– the scream of Juno's peacock.[28]

It is precisely when the imbalance is dominant that the equation between man as poet and bird breaks down. Then "The falcon cannot hear the falconer."[29]

But Dickinson seems to urge the falconer on, suggesting that poetic effort may attain what is out of sight:

Out of sight? What of that?
See the Bird–reach it!
Curve by Curve–Sweep by Sweep–
Round the Steep Air–
Danger! What is that to Her?
Better 'tis to fail–there–
Than debate–here–[30]

Dickinson's use of circular imagery recalls Yeats' conviction that the pattern of history itself is circular. Balance will be restored. Dickinson seems to have experienced this sense of restoration:

The first Day's Night had come–
And grateful that a thing
So terrible–had been endured–
I told my Soul to sing–

She said her Strings were snapt–
Her Bow–to atoms blown–
And so to mend her–gave me work
Until another Morn–[31]

But such resolution suggests folly or madness. Is there a resemblance between Emily and Yeats' Crazy Jane? Dickinson's claim that "Much Madness is divinest Sense"[32] does suggest Crazy Jane's refrain: *"All things remain in God."*[33] Yeats' fascination with sea-birds, Dickinson's fascination with a sea she never saw, Yeats' third hermit "By a cold and desolate sea" singing unnoticed, and Dickinson herself seem suggested by Yeats' poem, "A Crazed Girl":

That crazed girl improvising her music,
Her poetry, dancing upon the shore,
Her soul in division from itself
Climbing, falling she knew not where,
Hiding amid the cargo of a steamship,
Her knee-cap broken, that girl I declare
A beautiful lofty thing, or a thing
Heroically lost, heroically found.

No matter what disaster occurred
She stood in desperate music wound,
Wound, wound, and she made in her triumph
Where the bales and the baskets lay
No common intelligible sound
But sang, 'O sea-starved, hungry sea.'[34]

Remember that one of the connotations for the word "birds" in the phrase "for the birds" is "crazy people." Such crazy people are wounded by the times that are uncommonly stupid and careless. Unnoticed or not, they may wind themselves up in nests of song, improvising safety, improvising flight. Lost or found, either way heroically, they may shy away from the glaring glint of switchblades. Yet, even as they turn away, they have recognized the killers of cock robin and the mockingbird. They may envy the "wild duck" that drowns itself to avoid capture. They may hold gently the shot "sea gull." But like Whitman's "solitary singer" they know the clue, the key to it all, "the word out of the sea": death. Thus do birds and poets remind themselves of what we all have in common.

[1] *Collected Poems*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960. p. 111.
[2] *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed., Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958. Letter #269.
[3] *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed., Thomas H. Johnson, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960. Poem #1659.
[4] *Collected Poems*, p. 119.
[5] Dickinson, *Letters*, #86.
[6] *Ibid.*, #230.
[7] New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. p. 82.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[10] New York, The Macmillan Company, 1938. p. 16.
[11] *Letters*, #782.
[12] *Reveries of Childhood and Youth*, p. 31.
[13] *Letters*, #890.
[14] *Poems*, #24.
[15] *Collected Poems*, pp. 191-192. "Sailing to Byzantium."
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 118. "A Song from 'The Player Queen.'"
[17] *Poems*, #130.
[18] *Ibid.*, #1420.
[19] *Ibid.*, #850.
[20] Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 334. "That Statesman's Holiday."
[21] T. H. White, *The Bestiary*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954. p. 150.
[22] Dickinson, *Poems*, #1304.
[23] Jules Michelet, *The Bird*, London; 1872. p. 115.
[24] *Poems*, #685.
[25] *Collected Poems*, p. 150. "His Phoenix."
[26] *The Immense Journey*, New York: Random House, 1946. p. 166.
[27] Dickinson, *Poems*, #1279.
[28] *A Vision*, p. 268.
[29] Yeats, *Collected Poems*, p. 184. "The Second Coming."
[30] Dickinson, *Poems*, #703.
[31] *Ibid.*, #410.
[32] *Ibid.*, #435.
[33] Yeats, *Collected Poems*, pp. 253-254. "Crazy Jane on God."
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 301.

Trophy In Happy Valley

by Timothy Thornburgh

It was a sultry May day, not ideal for much of anything except swilling Colt 45's. The rains of April were past. The Ohio River Valley ran the usual spectrum of drab colours. The desolated woods were a collage of greens, reds, blues and yellow.

Marvin continued pumping the thin black tires of his Italian ten speed bike. The guage hit fifty-two, fifty-four, fifty-six. He paused, swung his arm across his forehead smearing a mud swollen river of sweat across his eyebrow. He removed the pump, kicked the tires and lay down in the grass.

The clouds, yeah the clouds, he thought, are like a stadium and the small one on the upper right is the pack in the first turn. It's why of course. Me in the L.A. finals bolting into the lead. And there goes the whisp of a cloud crashing into the third turn thirtieth lap. Wow! When will it all end?

"Marv, how are you?" a familiar face peered at him.

"Tripper?"

"Who the hell else could I be?"

"Good point," admitted Marvin as he slowly arose from his dreamy repose in the grassy quad. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Executing my parents' will and cycling about Frisco. Great city. The hills tone the leg muscles. And the careening traffic sharpens the reflexes.

"I'm sorry about your parents."

"Best thing that ever happened to them," dryly commented Trip.

"How can you say that?" said Marvin feeling sick at such callousness.

"In all sincerity, it's true. The old man and lady were fat, alcoholic, right wing bastards. They clapped when Bobby Kennedy was shot. God! That sickened me. Then the old man writes an editorial for the Chronicle on what a tragedy it was. Hypocritical? Jesus! He was perverse. When their plane was reported missing, I drank a whole bottle of wine. If only such a fate awaited all the Birchers in this country!"

He hadn't changed in his year's absence, thought Marvin. A cum laude graduate of Creighton College. The most devious and despicable phil. major ever to make the Creighton scene. He ran the library Xerox machine and catalogued books in the evening. He sure was surprised when caught filching test questions and essays from the Xerox master recording cylinders. Scared shitless! Why didn't I turn him in? He made an easy hundred a month cataloguing books and an even easier hundred tutoring jocks. And what did I do? Washed dishes for room and board in the frat house. Someday someone would blow the whistle.

"Marvin, have you seen Dizzy Miss Lizzy lately?"

"Who?"

"Lizzie."

"Of course." answered Marvin.

"I spent the night with her. We only talked of course."

"Really?" mumbled Marvin.

"Hey, what's the matter sport?"

"Nothing, man. Nothing." said Marvin turning away.

"Hey kid," comforted Trip, "I'm sorry. Hey, it wasn't like you think. We only talked."

"Sure," muttered Marvin scowling.

"Marv," said Trip, "you and I are best of friends. I couldn't find you last night and well, Lizzie's about the only other person here I know and, hell I was lonely so I looked her up. If you were me, what would you do?"

Sure, thought Marvin. My best friend. My former roomie. I hardly ever slept in the room. Same old story every weekend. Me on a couch in the lounge. Trip in bed with an adventuress co-ed. But Lizzie sleeping with Trip? It just couldn't be. After all, she hadn't even been to bed with me.

"I said I'm sorry," offered Trip penitently.

"Trip?"

"Yeah."

"Are you naturally dull or just intentionally playing stupid?"

"What?" answered Trip.

"That Lizzie business was a bit much."

Trip was silent. That was worrisome. Anyone who knew him knew that his silence was synonymous with scheming. Then on the other hand his reticence was a relief. It was time to slow the adrenal flow. Time to return to rational thought. Time unadulterated.

"Are you house president this year?" asked Trip.

"Yeah."

"That's good to hear. The Phi Delts need a strong pres."

"Thanks," said Marvin still a bit on edge.

"Hey, how come you guys pledged so many 'indyuckians'?"

"Jesus! Trip. You just won't quit, will you? Where a pledge lives doesn't mean shit to a tree. It's what he can contribute. Indiana? Kentucky? California? Who cares? Seriously?"

"I've heard that before," said Trip irritably.

Marvin tried not to lose his temper. He clenched his fists and tensed his biceps.

"Sorry again, Marv," pleaded Trip. "I don't mean to anger you."

"Then mean what you say," jockeyed Marvin.

Again Trip fell silent. Marvin sighed to himself. Another round approaching. For some reason Trip would persist. He was headhunting. Needing a trophy. Why me? Marvin asked himself. Yeah. He knew the answer. Lizzie wouldn't sleep with the bastard. She shot him down. Perhaps before a group of Phi Delt pledges. Marvin was on the verge of bursting into hysterics.

"How many pledges laughed when Lizzie told you to get lost?" said Marvin.

"None," blurted Trip.

"You dumb fool. You didn't sleep with Lizzie," laughed Marvin.

"What do you mean?" stammered Trip.

"You damn well know what I mean," retorted Marvin.

"Bullshit!" bellowed Trip.

"Sure, Trip. Sure. I'll bet you had her crying for more," derided Marvin.

"Cool it! Just cool it!" hissed Trip.

"Cycling in Frisco," mocked Marvin. "Are you sure that you know how to operate that ten speed?"

"I do all right," cooly responded Trip.

Another silence interceded. Marvin sensed that the jousting was in an embryonic state. Trip wasn't often caught with his mouth open and his pants down. And this being the second time. After the library incident, Marvin spent a semester quietly squelching rumors concerning his masculinity. It was damn difficult. Till Lizzie came along.

"Hey Marv, are you up for the backbone?"

"Get serious Trip. That's a two mile descent into the bowels of Happy Valley."

"No shit!" howled Trip, adding, "Notice my bike. No brakes. Think of it. A treacherous ride that allows only the most skillful to survive. Now hang on to your sensibilities for a second. Or better still, a minute. Consider this. What two people, what TWO PEOPLE, better yet, what two cyclists, in the universe, have both the technical skill and that innate quality better known as courage to challenge momma nature to a duel? You, a cycling champion, in the past. Me, a cycling enthusiast who may well become the world's greatest. The French Grand Prix beckons me but first the backbone."

"Bastard! Crazy bastard!" thought Marvin. He really wants to see how much biker's left in me. The daredevil novice has the audacity to challenge the Kentucky State Champion to a suicide ride. "O.K. What's the road condition?" Marvin asked.

"Excellent. No washouts, no fallen trees, no obstacles out of the ordinary. Ran it once already today."

"Ran it once already, eh? You realize how fast that horseshoe bend at the bottom of the gorge is?"

Presents no problems to the true cyclist. Actually it looks a hell of a lot harder that it really is," said Trip.

"What are you trying to do, Trip?"

"Why ask a question when you want to make a statement. We're friends. Speak your mind."

"All right. First of all you didn't ride the backbone without braking. Because, when you're strapped into the pedals . . ."

Trip interrupted, "I know what you're going to say. At high speeds, especially downhill, you can brake by not pedalling as fast as the bike's momentum would have you go. But you'll either pull a muscle or strip your gears. Think about it. Marvin, you can't control the speed. It's a run of sheer cycling skill."

He's mad, Marvin reflected. If he leans wrong once or takes his eyes off the road, he's gone-forever. If this should happen near the river side of the road it's a thousand feet to terra ferma. Whew! That's just not my gig. "No, Tripper. You can make the fool's run by yourself. I'm out."

"Marvin," said Trip deprecatingly, "I thought you were a cyclist. Well, catch you later."

"You think you're a cyclist! I'll show you what a real cycling champion—that's right—cycling champion, is all about. Whew! I'm sorry, guess I lost my temper. Well, let's go."

"Sorry, Marvin. I was only kidding. We all know you're the best cyclist in the country."

"You deserve the brown paper bag full of shit award, Tripper. You really do. Christ I need a shovel every time I get near you."

"You play some pretty heavy games, Marvin. But the backbone doesn't bullshit."

As they rode toward the backbone, Marvin wondered why he was making the run. Why did Tripper anger him? Why couldn't he turn around. Why?

"Brakes disconnected Marvin?" asked Trip, his voice too soft and too gentle to be real. It was the inflexion of innocence, thought Marvin. Something Trip had never shown. Perhaps never known.

"Wouldn't have it any other way."

Why not? Marvin mused. But that's not the question. And the answer's 'because'. Simply 'because'. It's like cats. They never kill their prey immediately. That would be too easy. They play with it—torment it to death. Fieldmouse number 457268 died from shit hemorrhage while in the outstretched claws of the villainous cat. Why? Because.

"Marvin? Hey, Marvin. Wanta catch your breath before we do the backbone? Don't look so pained, I understand. It's a rough ride."

"No you don't understand," said Marvin, "But when I say 'go' we start. Are you ready?"

"Anytime you are."

"Go!"

"Waaaaaaahoooo!"

Trip made the first turn and was making sure the whole damn world knew, thought Marvin as he leaned right and neatly negotiated the first bend.

It was an exacting turn high on the banked bend that enabled him to draw even with Trip in the second turn.

There was a pounding of tires to asphalt that drowned all other sounds. Marvin's shoulder sockets felt as if he had hydraulic jack hammers for arms. The wind was burning his eyes. His legs ached, but he was strapped into the pedals. The third turn was approaching.

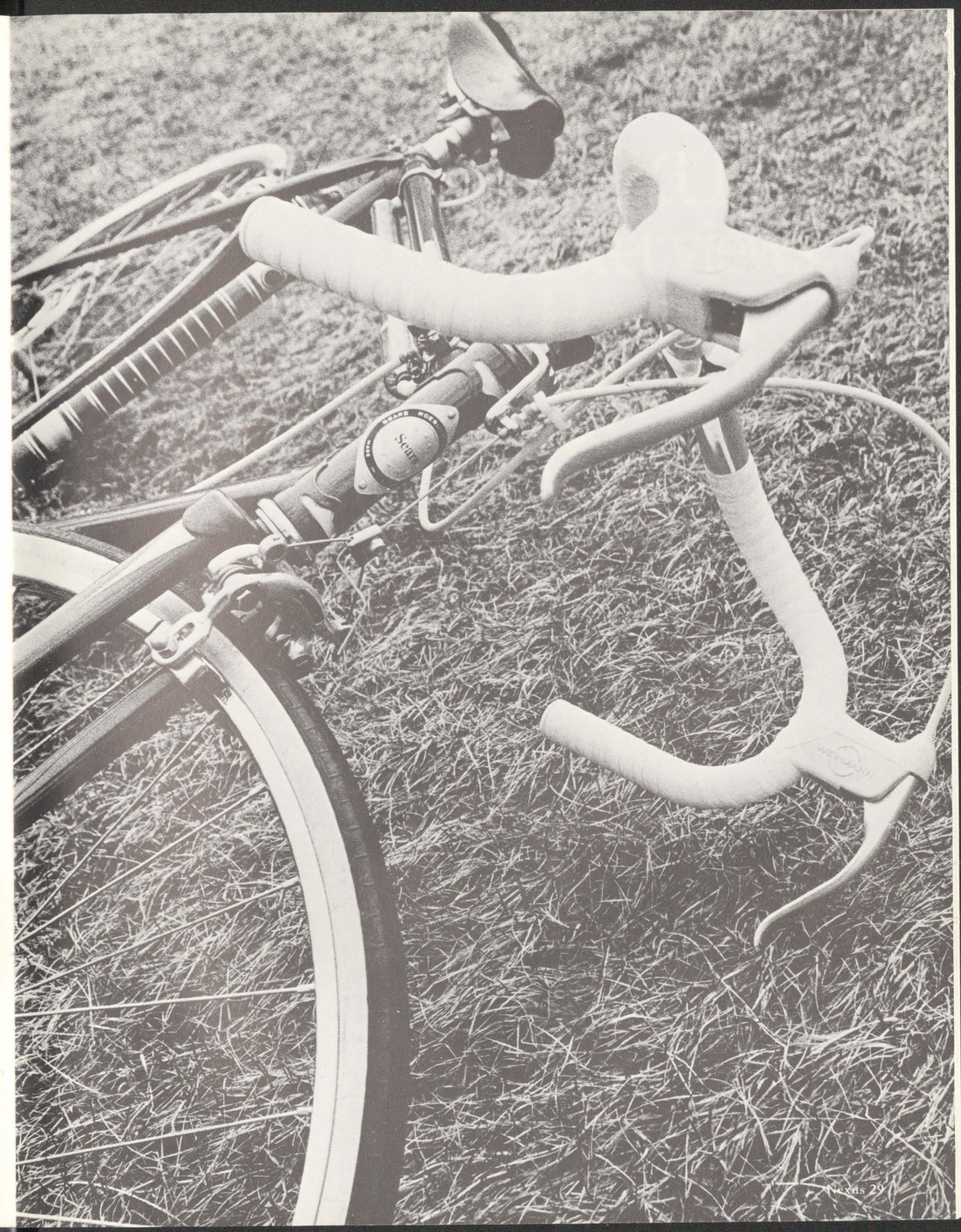
Trip had the inside track and was turning wide. Dogleg left. Gorge to the right.

"Over man! Over!" screamed Marvin.

Trip's back wheel fishtailed slightly on the brink of asphalt and infinity. But he recovered.

It's gonna be tight, thought Marvin. His tires were on the brim as he entered the turn. He leaned hard left and swung his front wheel equally hard.

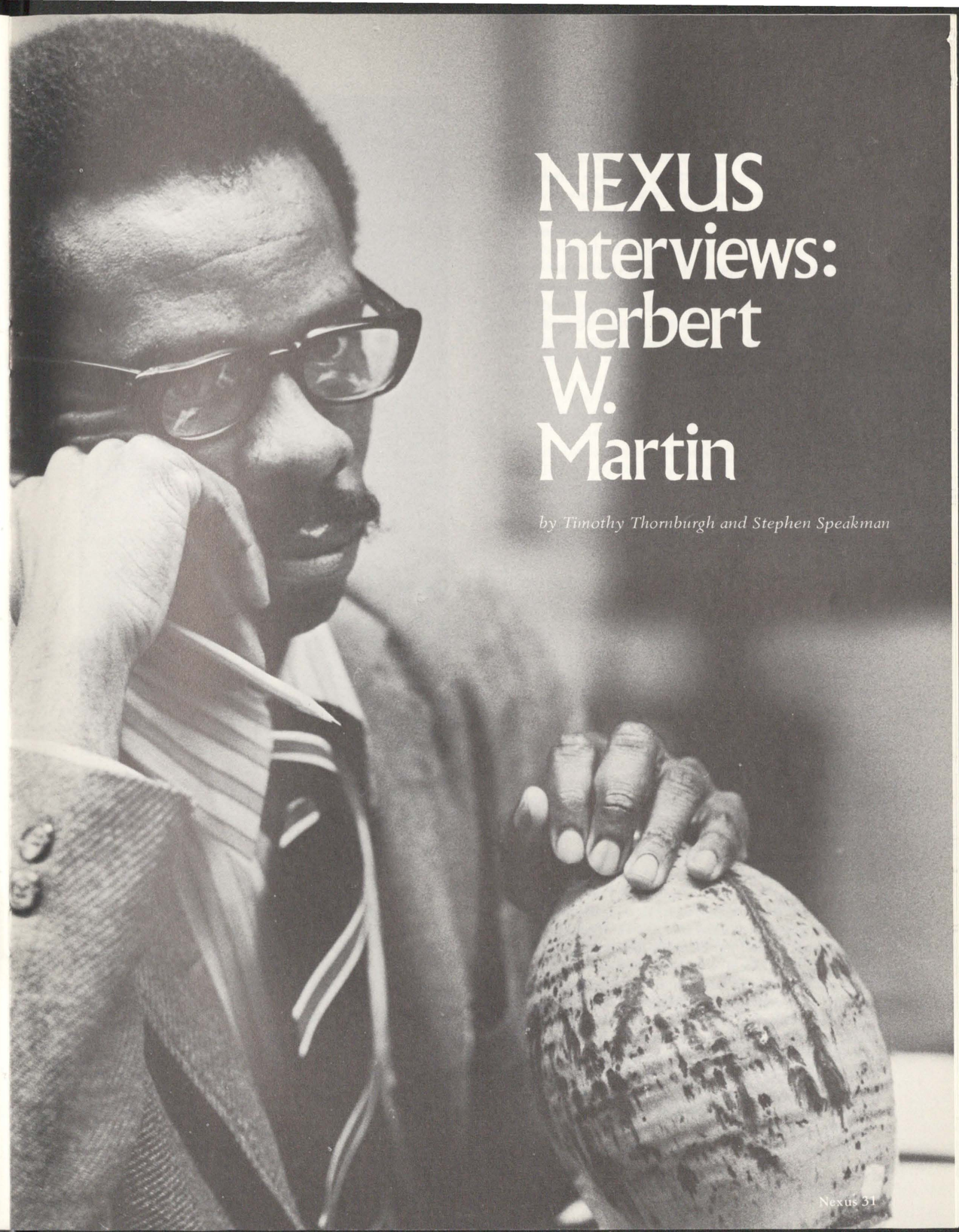
The woods strobed by—greens, reds, yellow. The sky was a faint blue. And the clouds, yes, the clouds were in constant motion forming new images. And the grass was soft on impact.



Chicken Farm

I always thought of you
as an india-inked
cartoon character
raising chickens on an
Oklahoma chicken farm
and listening to country-
western music on a front
porch—sun to hot to work
under.
But you aren't, are you?
You drive an old Buick
and wear your brother's
old sweaters. I must have
thought you a chicken-farming-
india-inked-saturday-morning-
funny-paper-cartoon-character
because of the dreams that fell
out of your mouth and the visions
you said you saw in my
breath on cold mornings.
But too suddenly real,
and common, I wish to be away
from you and not react
anymore. I want so much
to hold onto that
chicken farmer image—
it protects me.

J.R. Alley



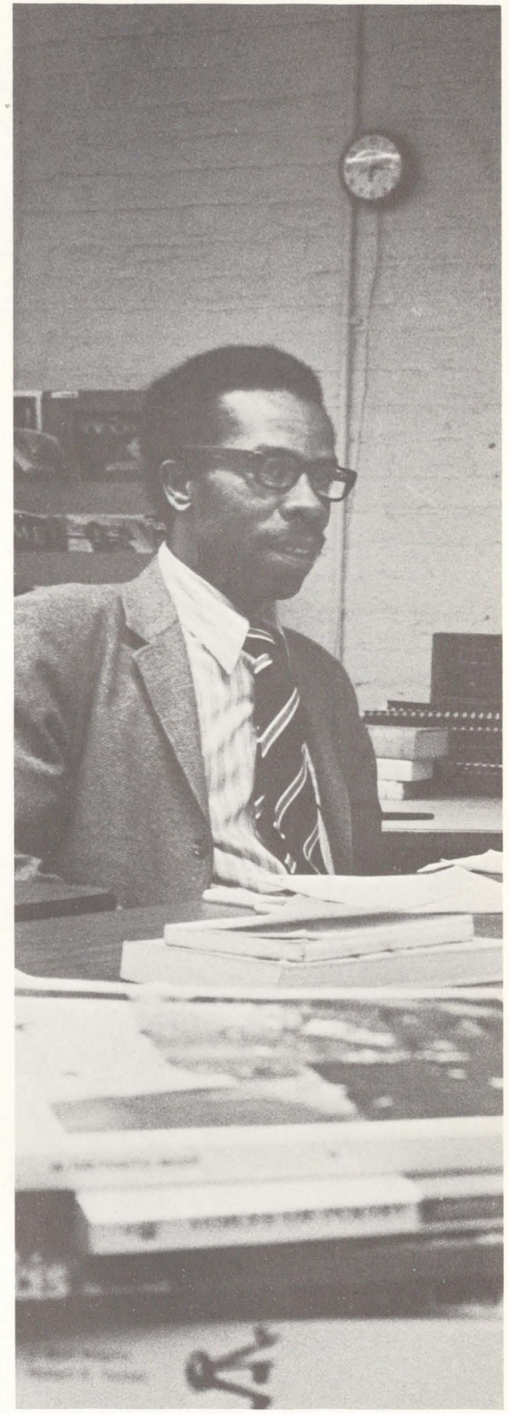
NEXUS Interviews: Herbert W. Martin

by Timothy Thornburgh and Stephen Speakman

Herbert W. Martin is presently assistant professor of English at the University of Dayton. Prior to this he was poet-in-residence at Aquinas College.

Mr. Martin's academic studies have taken him to the University of Toledo and the State University of New York at Buffalo. His poetic pursuits have lead him to studies with John Ciardi, W. D. Snodgrass, Judson Jerome, John Frederick Nims, Donald Hall, Robert Creeley, and Karl Shapiro.

His poems have appeared in such periodicals as the *Activist, Trace, Epoch, Mainstream, Chelsea, Descent, Fine Arts, Discovery, Micromegas, Arts in Society,* and the *New Orleans Review.* He is the author of *New York, the nine million and other poems.* He has also written a number of plays which have appeared off Broadway.



Nexus: When did you first start writing and why?
Martin: Ok. The story goes something like this . . .
Nexus: You've heard this question before?
Martin: Yeah, and so I have a pat answer. No, I think I really seriously began writing in 1960. I think maybe, five years before that, one of my undergraduate teachers read some of my material and I heard by the grapevine that she had said, "This is the most God-awful stuff I have ever read in my whole life." I thought that if it was that bad, then what I must start to do is write poems that can be understood by people. That was a very serious juncture in my life. Then in 1960 I got a fellowship to Breadloaf (writer's workshop) and to the University of Colorado. I studied that summer with Karl Shapiro, Robert Frost, John Ciardi, and John Frederick Nims, and I got a lot of nice comments. I went away thinking, okay, I must work very hard at it now if I want to make anything out of it.
Nexus: What kind of influence did Ciardi and Shapiro have on you?
Martin: I remember Ciardi saying you must find suitable metaphors; ultimately that kind of influence has paid off. I think that there was a kind of literal freedom that Shapiro taught me about which I somehow seemed to absorb in my blood.
Nexus: Anybody else?
Martin: The other person, I must confess, is X. J. Kennedy. The X doesn't stand for anything but he put the X there because of the Kennedys. They were very popular. He showed me how to tighten lines, an incredible thing that I've never forgotten. I really owe it to him that I dislike the and so much. He said the and really functions like a comma or the caesura. Like I would have the sun rose and the moon set and this, that, and this. He said you could literally lift all these words out and the poem will just fall into place. They did and I was really amazed that he took that much time to sit down with me in 1960 and read my stuff and show me those little technical tricks, which I basically want to pass on to my students.
Nexus: In writing poems, does it seem like you're writing for emotional release or is it a form of honest confrontation with your problems?
Martin: Sometimes it is out of honest confrontation with a problem that I'm trying to deal with. Other times I feel that it is a poem that is building up and up and suddenly it all comes out. I really do think that all poems are emotional constructs even when they are intellectual poems.
Nexus: In *Farenheit 451°* by Ray Bradberry, the outcasts had to memorize a book to preserve literature. If you were put in this position, what book would you memorize?
Martin: I don't really know. Certainly the one thing I wouldn't memorize is my stuff. It probably would be an anthology of short stories or poems that I though best represented the emotions of my time. If not, I would probably fall back on Shakespeare. For one reason, the vocabulary is there and I could start all over. If not Shakespeare, then the Bible and probably the King James version because the music is there. I trust the literalness of all the other translators, but the music is lacking. They have fingers, but no talent.
Nexus: What sort of impact has the black experience had on your poetry?
Martin: Sometimes a terrible one. That's when they are unkind because they think I'm not writing black poetry. Other times there are good experiences. I think basically when I sit down to write poetry, I don't think about if I'm going to write black poetry. By the very fact that I'm black the poem is black. By the fact that I keep thinking that I'm going to be a poet someday, I still have to learn all the things that I think all other poets must know. I try to take these devices and assimilate them, let them come out as they will in terms of what I write. One of the things I want to avoid is any confrontations with people who say you aren't writing any more black poems. I started with a poem about a black cowboy basically to keep those militants away. My concern is really to be the best writer in my generation. I think if you write, it has to be about your own experiences. If it's meaningful to anybody, then it raises the level of the human condition and that seems to be important.
Nexus: The critical opinion seems to be that America is foremost artistically in the field of poetry and that it has fallen behind in the field of the novel and drama. How do you react to that since you are also a playwright?
Martin: I think that the most exciting theater being written now is probably black. I don't mean that to sound prejudiced. They've gotten back to human situations and the whole ritual of drama. What's coming out of a lot of plays is a sense of contact, the whole sense of relating to communities, to groups of people, or to families.
Nexus: As an overview, would you say the black theater is by far the most experimental?
Martin: Yes, and for me probably the most exciting.
Nexus: What's become of your plays?
Martin: "The Dialogue" has finally seen the light of day in a book called *The Urban Reader.* I've written another play called "The Three Garbage Cans," which when I saw it done in Michigan reminded me very uncomfortably of *Beckett.* So I had it retired. I have a new play called "The King did not Applaud," which takes it's title from the late King of Denmark who just died recently. I was at the performance of an opera with him and he did not applaud with the rest of the people. He sat quietly until the whole opera was over and then applauded with the rest of the people when the artists came out and bowed down to him. The play is now in a contest and Paul Reuben, a young director, would like to do it. It was scheduled to be done in Newport, a world premiere, along with a jazz festival and the classical concert there this coming summer. I'm not sure yet what is to be done with it. It is now hanging on in those two places. If I'm lucky I'll see it done, if not I'll wait till next time. The lady who published the first play is also anxious to do another book so she can get the first call at publishing it. She's been very kind to me. I will remember that she wants it and allow her to publish it. So that's bascially where it is. I also have some things brewing in my mind that I want to work out.
Nexus: Do you consider yourself first and foremost a playwright or a poet?
Martin: I consider myself foremost an apprentice. I'm not sure that I've learned all the things that I really need.
Nexus: Can you ever be sure of that?
Martin: No, I doubt it; so I will always go on saying I'm an apprentice. That kind of modesty I learned from Frost, but really I don't believe that! So let me tell you I want the Nobel Prize.
Nexus: You spoke of your success as a playwright. How about some of your poetry?
Martin: I've been fairly lucky in the last two years. Things I've written recently have suddenly begun to see the light of day. My first book has done very well though I continue to lose contests every day. I've been fairly lucky with long poems, I guess they're coming back into vogue. People have been willing to take poems of mine that are up to 100 lines. I've been fairly fortunate with the New York poems and the Deadwood Dick poems.
Nexus: So, you've got two Chapbooks that have been published now?
Martin: No, one.
Nexus: How are the sales of it?
Martin: The first edition sold out. The second edition is almost gone, too.
Nexus: How large are the editions?
Martin: 1,000 copies.
Nexus: Who publishes them?
Martin: The first one was published by Abra-Kadabra Press in Michigan, and I guess it's all magic that they made any money at all. I really felt that when they took the book, that I owed them something so I hit the reading trail and got the sales going.
Nexus: What sort of royalties did you receive?
Martin: $500 for the first edition. It's already spent. I bought some paintings which I think will be worth a lot of money in future years.
Nexus: How do you perceive the future of literature?
Martin: People will write and sit down and record their impressions. Even with feeding things into computers . . . Ten years ago someone gave me a film strip kind of thing with words on the film and numbers and you just pull the

thing down and write the poems that way. Poems aren't electronic; there has to be some emotion and I suspect that you will always find people who are emotionally attached to the word and emotionally given to it. They will always want to write down what they feel rather than having the computer do it for them. That's a way of making poems, I'm not sure it's a viable thing or that it will last.

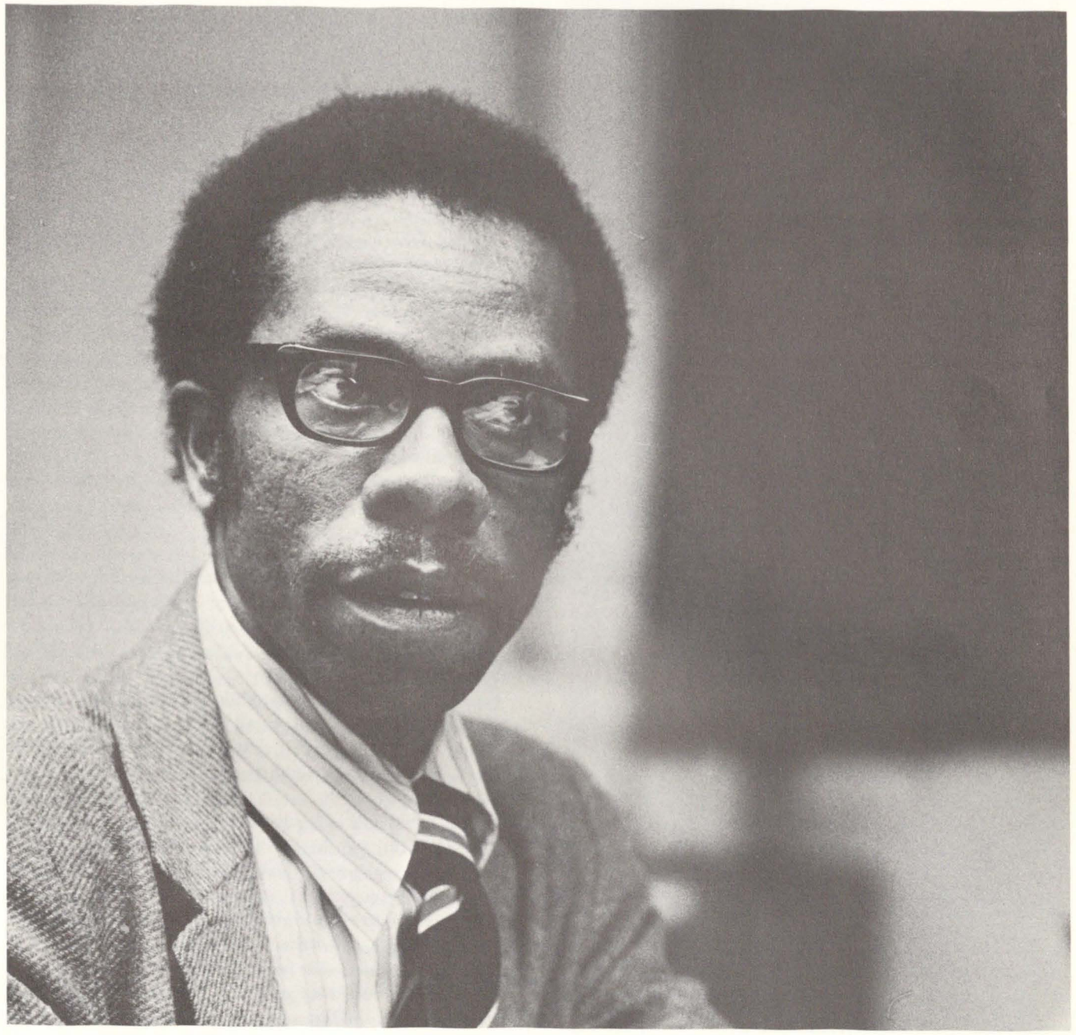
Nexus: Do you compose on the tape recorder?

Martin: When I'm driving down the highway, I go at excessive speeds and I get ideas and read them into the tape recorder. Then when I get home, I listen to the tape recorder and put them in my notes and I work on it from that point. But I don't walk around with a tape recorder, taping poems as Alan Ginsberg says he does. I question him on that and I know he does revise. It's deceptive when poets say they don't revise, because they revise it before they write it down. I compose in a notebook. I'm oldfashioned in that I like longhand. I very seldom compose at the typewriter. I'm just now learning how to compose essays at the typewriter. For all my graduate years I wrote everything, then I typed it. I do everything in longhand and let the secretaries type it out.

Nexus: Is that part of the game?

Martin: I thing it is basically a game and it probably doesn't matter what people call you so long as you have a sense of yourself, a sense of your own being and that you really are, as we say colloquially, "together." All of those things are just sort of facades.

Nexus: Is being an artist more important than being black, white, Jewish, or Korean?



Martin: Yes, you could say that. It really is. The only reason I write is that I think I have something valid to say about how one gets through this life, how you deal with problems you're faced with, and there are major and minor problems. They're little incidents here and there. How do you get through the day dealing with those things? How do you get through the night with frustrations and loneliness? How do you get through the years that way? What happens is you have to deal with those things and that's much more important when you see somebody in a ghetto or in Appalachia or in Kettering, that becomes a different kind of isolation.

Nexus: How far do you think social issues should permiate poetry or any art?

Martin: I would like to think that all poems are protest poems and all poems are love poems that are protesting some sort of social condition. If it's unrequited love, it's saying, "Why doesn't that woman pay any attention to me? Here I am dying, wasting away on this bed and nobody loves me." It's protesting the fact that one one's paying attention. I wrote a poem about a Negro soldier's Viet Nam diary and I'm still sort of suspicious about the poem. It's a war poem, it's topical, and my suspicion rests with the fact that it doesn't extend beyond the level of the Viet Nam war.

Nexus: Then the poet shouldn't concern himself with topical things?

Martin: I think he should be aware that they're going on. I think that if I ran out and wrote a poem about people knocking Yevtushenko off the stage that I probably wouldn't come up with a very good poem even though I dislike that sort of thing. I'm not so sure that I won't write a protest poem some day, something like, "Let people be free and go wherever they want to go."

Nexus: Is protest an art?

Martin: I should think not. The way we see people demonstrate today there's no art, no talent at all, they just sort of get together and go marching off without ever thinking of the consequences. I think protest is a viable social means of changing certain things and if it is organized well, you see some sort of order in that organization just as you do in the order of a novel or play or poem. Then protest becomes a viable instrument to use.

Nexus: What do you think of modern music as a form of poetry?

Martin: I think that modern music like modern poetry is very dissonant. I feel very strongly that there are no melodies.

Nexus: What are your impressions of Frost's poetry and Pound's poetry?

Martin: Frost died frustrated because he didn't get the Nobel Prize, and I think he did expect to be nominated. I think one of the reasons he didn't get it was that he didn't translate well into other languages. The person I really think deserves the Nobel Prize is Ezra Pound. I would give it to Pound because he is the most influential poet in the 20th century. He's written some great poems. I think politics have always kept him from getting it.

Nexus: How do you read the poems of Alan Ginsberg?

Martin: I think Ginsberg wrote the major poems of the 50's. I don't think anyone's done a comparable achievement in terms of images, in terms of lines, in terms of that inner music I hear in poems. It's sort of all there. It touches me in terms of the best minds of my generation are going down as I see it before me and it's a frightening image. I suspect he would approve of that. I do think "Howl" is a major poem and I think he's been fairly influential in trying to get the poetry back to the people.

Nexus: What is your relationship with the Beat poets?

Martin: They were very nice to me. They never said, "Change your style of writing." They understood what I was doing and what I thought, "All the things read about these people are wrong." They do understand technique, they do know what they are doing. They are educated and they may be hiding it from the general public, but you know that they are. They've read enough to be as educated as their peers who have gone to college and got a degree. That was the first thing that I learned after reading their poetry. But I was so timid and young then. The first time I read in the Village, I read under a pseudonym because I really did expect them to laugh at or to run me out of the coffeehouse. They didn't. They asked me if I would like to join their workshop. I thought, "Oh, you're in trouble now, get rid of that phoney name. You have to tell them your real name because you don't want them calling you by someone else's," at which point I thought, "Ok, you can probably do it if you work at it long enough." That was one of the confidences I came away with, the reading experience that I had in New York. It was really very nice for me. Afterwards, I was never afraid to read in public because I'd faced the lions and they were very nice. There are still people who are impossible, who say "You're kidding, you don't possibly expect me to like that junk!" It is a kind of gauntlet that you have run when you go to read because some people are very unkind. I still expect people will not like my stuff. That's fair so long as I think they've looked at it and decided it wasn't for them. It's ok.

Contrapuntal No. 7 for Fred Reading

by Herbert W. Martin

And do you wonder why
in those last two months
we came to touch so close
I found an allowance of courage
fearing neither kiss nor embrace
to drive my image straight
hungering between two worlds?

And Winter Comes Again

by Barbara Heinen

Hello, Leo, Jane. Nice to see you again. How have you been?

Oh, fine. And you?

All right. My, how your children have grown.

Yes, and they don't care much for grocery shopping anymore, but they wanted to come so they could choose their own cookies and cereal.

I prefer to shop alone.

Oh, I always make Leo come with me. Well, we must be hurrying along. Have to pick up Brian at football practice. Come to see us sometime, OK, Violet?

Sure.

She was willowy, dark, aloof, well-known as a ballerina, wife of a television producer. Her eyes were black, penetrating, mysterious. I couldn't decide if she never laughed because she didn't like to laugh, or if she never laughed because no one had ever shown her things to laugh about. I had known her for a year, had desired her from the first night I had lain eyes upon her, across the room at a wretched Christmas party. I had made it a point, thereafter, to happen to be places where she happened to be as often as possible. But somehow, despite a rather infamously uninhibited past, I found this woman hard to approach. What was wrong with me, anyway? I had never before desired a woman so much, but most certainly I had never desired any other woman for a full year without making one single pass. She had me stymied. She had me upset. I lost interest in my job, and took to writing poetry. More and more I eased myself away from my homelife—from my wife Jane, plain but pleasant, and my three growing children. I took to reading alone in the den, walking alone in the park, driving alone in the country.

But in the poetry, in the books, in the park, in the country—I found no peace, I found no answer. And so I would come back to the city, hoping by chance, perhaps, to somewhere see Violet. And occasionally I did see Violet, but always she was with others—lunching at Mario's, bustling through Lord's, attending church with her family: distinguished greying husband, tall, dark, handsome twin sons of twelve. Always reserved, head held high, never looking quite at me, but pleasant—hello, Leo, so nice to see you, and how is your lovely family.

And then one Saturday in the following December, I saw her in the suburban grocery store, shopping, alone. I had never looked there for her. Somehow, I had never pictured lovely ballerinas as having to buy peas and carrots. This is your big chance, buddy, I told myself. If you flub this one, you'll be officially and dishonorably discharged from the Honor Roll of the All American Studs.

"Violet—what a pleasant surprise—where've you been keeping yourself?"

Same old shit—working hard, and so nice to see you, and how's your lovely family. Still avoiding my eyes.

"You should wear black more often, Violet. It really does complement your dark beauty."

Thank you, Leo, I must be going now.

"Can I help you with your groceries? Do you have your car? Beautiful women shouldn't be forced to carry heavy grocery bags!"

No thank you, Leo, I can manage. I must be going now.

Disaster.

Leo the bold one has struck out. At least you tried this time, old buddy, but you failed. And miserably.

Must be losing my touch. Good God—do you suppose I'm over the hill? Over the goddamned hill at thirty-six? No—never say die. Next time will be different.

And so I took to more frequent Saturday grocery shopping, and struck out three more times before Violet started taking to less frequent Saturday grocery shopping.

Now I became insane with the obsession. My walks became longer, my drives were only semi-conscious. I was a menace on the road, a stranger in my own household. Jane was kind, and tried to be understanding, but she could not enter my mind. She served the cabbage rolls and the Mexican chili that I dearly loved more often these days, but my appetite was weak. She worried about that, too, but I told her I had problems at work, and was trying to work them out in my mind.

Trying. Trying. But not succeeding.

But all was not lost, for February the ninth had yet to come.

And February the ninth did come, and in my blindness of things to come, I thought it was an ugly day. (God! How wrong can you get?) The snow which had lain so beautifully on the Connecticut countryside as a virgin last weekend had by Friday become an ugly, aged whore roaming the streets of lower Manhattan. She flaunted her wet pavements, slushy streets and piles of soot-blackened ice which had been pushed against the buildings. The stagnant air hung heavy with her perfume, the peculiar stench of wet wool. Commuters sloshed to and fro, complaining of mud-splattered legs and soggy newspapers, and displaying generally shitty dispositions on this cold and drizzly, slate-grey day. The office, which had over the past year, become for me nothing more than a necessary drudge, was even more depressing today. The grey wool carpet beyond the elevator door was stained and wet the umbrella stand was dripping and jammed beyond capacity, the secretary was snippy, and all my co-workers wanted to argue. The fluorescent lights glared, and I remembered remorsefully what I had really wanted to be—a pro football player. But I was here, on Wall Street, in an office, and this was my job, and I hated it more than ever today. It was a bad day all around, and five o'clock came about twenty hours after nine A.M.

My train would not arrive until 5:30, so I stopped to have a blah cup of coffee and two stale donuts at the filthy morgue-like automat on Trinity Place. Emerging into the dreary Friday evening, spirits low, depression high, I started to hurry toward the station when I saw her. Clothed in lavender and fur, and shod in long slim shiny black boots, she looked as only she could look—like a bunch of April violets in the midst of the slush of Manhattan February. She was trying to hail a cab, but "ladies" never have any luck in that department, especially on cold rainy Friday

afternoons. Everyone else has the same idea, but most of the hailers have more push and more guts than a lady in lavender. Success in the form of a battered cab which will provide a death-defying flight through the confused and angry streets of New York comes only to the valiant and the pricks: those who know the game of driver vs. potential rider, those brave enough to stand two lanes from the curb with both arms raised, crying "Give me a taxi or give me death!", those who fake broken ankles in the gutter, those who push little old ladies aside to bang their umbrellas on passing cabs as they shout obscenities that are part of the game. Success does not come to lovely ladies in lavender with one hand quietly raised.

Suddenly, the dark, cold evening vanished. My heart warmed, my body quickened. I bounded through the slush, spraying it over disgruntled New Yorkers as I went. "Violet! Can I help you get a cab?" For such a lovely lady in lavender (even more lovely now than I had formerly realized) I could be valiant. And I could be a prick.

"Leo–I could use some help. Perhaps you're my stroke of luck for today." No "So nice to see you and how is your lovely family. No I must be going now." Amazing!

And so, after three death leaps, five newly-formed enemies, seventeen cabs, forty-two obscenities and one broken umbrella, I managed to get a driver to stop only fifty feet beyond us and wait. He complained and he grumbled and he spat, but he waited. In fact, he complained and he grumbled and he spat all the way to Scarsdale, making every attempt to completely ruin what could have been a beautiful ride with a lovely lady. A lovely lady with whom I had longed to sit for more than a year, and who now sat beside me, tall, dark and mysterious, but somehow different than the other times. Today, not so aloof. Today, trembling. Did she tremble from the cold, or from a fear of me? Or could it be she trembled from a fear of herself, a fear of a thaw? I longed to find out why she trembled, and to stop her trembling. I knew I could. If only that goddamned Brooklyn cabbie would run out of things to bitch about, demanding a comment from me on everything from the Mets to pot to women drivers to Mayor Lindsay.

Ten minutes before we would reach Violet's home, I realized time was dwindling rapidly to nothingness, and I clutched at my one chance. "Violet, you seem upset tonight. Why don't we stop somewhere and have a drink? Perhaps you can tell me what's wrong," I whispered during a rather long harangue on police corruption.

"I guess it would be all right. For just a short while. I really mustn't be too late, you know." At that instant she turned her face toward mine, and, for the first time since I had known her, turned her eyes toward mine. For the first time, those large black eyes were not ice on a marble pinnacle. For one brief moment, they were warm and liquid, but she quickly looked away, and a marvelous flush washed her face. And in that instant, premonition jolted me. My head swarmed with a momentary collage of ecstasies and anguishes beyond normal comprehension. If this was the future, could I take it? I had only thought of a traditional (for me) lion-like conquest of a sophisticated woman, a little fun, and back to the home fires. Nothing much, really. Nothing much that Leo could not handle, anyway. But this vision–it had me worried. Perhaps it was just the effects of a long hard week. Drunk on work, perhaps. Hell, yes, that was it. Premonitions are for superstitious old women. Nothing to it. I've messed up more than one hairdo, screwed more than one stuck-up bitch in my time, and this time would be no different. So what–olive skin, eyes of molten jet, hair to match, legs of a ballerina, furs from Saks–beneath it all, she was just like all the rest. I knew it. I wasn't worrying. Of course I wasn't worrying.

I managed to interrupt our friendly driver's discourse on "those goddamned lazy sons-a-bitches who are taking over the Waldorf-Astoria on my welfare tax money" long enough to ask him to let us off at the Roma Lounge. "OK, Buddy, but you shoulda told me earlier. It's Ok by me, but you coulda saved yerself a buck if you'da only told me a block ago!" He crossed three lanes of traffic, jammed on the brakes just soon enough to avoid killing a young couple while still scaring the hell out of them, and whirled left around the next corner. He could see in the rearview mirror that the young fellow had given him the finger, and he slammed on the brakes once more, rolled down the window, and returned the favor. An instant later, we were thrown violently once more against the backs of our seats, and took off as though we were testing at White Sands. Minutes later, we were literally "dumped" at the Roma, told that the whole goddamned world was going to pot, and thanked rather ungraceously for a tip considered too small for such a thrilling ride and so much insightful wisdom.

It was now quite dark, and the wind had whipped up to a numbing velocity. I had chosen the Roma because no one I knew ever went there, but as I took the slender arm of Violet and passed through the door, I almost hoped that at least one of those shits from the office would see me. She was astonishingly beautiful, and there were a couple of guys whom I would relish making more than a little jealous. We took a booth in the rear, and I kept my head at least enough to sit coolly across from Violet. No point in blowing the whole thing now by moving too fast. We had gotten this far, and after all, I was no amateur. Still, I was finding it hard to play it cool right now. God, what had happened to the Leo of old?

I ordered two Manhattans, and commenced the small talk. She had been on tour with the dance troupe for two weeks, and I encouraged her to talk about it. Her voice was velvet as she spoke, her eyes dancing with excitement as she talked of the art she so obviously loved. Her hands were full of gestures, the graceful gestures of a dancer. She was the only ballerina I had ever known, but I was certain that everyone who watched her (and most everyone in the Roma *did* watch her) could tell in a moment that she was a ballerina. Her poise, her grace, her sophisticated bearing, her long thin hands, her sleek black hair pulled back in a chignon, all bespoke her craft. I was admiring and immensely proud to be with her, but for the first time in his life,

Leo the Big Shot felt outclassed. Even the women watched her instead of me.

I had never seen her like this before. Her quiet vivaciousness was exciting me terribly, her eyes looked often into mine, and I was utterly shook. She told me of the boarding school her boys attended, and the fascination of her husband's work. I told her little things of my life, but somehow car pools and paper drives. patio barbecues and stopped-up sinks, TV repairs and the daily office grind could not compare with the excitement of the world in which she dwelt.

Finally I stopped in mid-sentence and abruptly blurted: "Why did you come with me tonight, Violet? All those times you turned me down, turned me off? Why tonight? You seem so different than I've ever seen you before."

"I came tonight, Leo, because I wanted to come tonight. If I trembled earlier, perhaps it was from an inner battle, and if I seem different now, perhaps the wrong side won. Perhaps I grew tired of fighting against myself. I really don't know, Leo. I'm truly confused, and I've said far more than I should have said. I'd better go."

"What's your hurry? You said Martin was in Chicago."

"That is why I had better go."

Like any gentleman, I would see her home. But I got no farther than the door. The night was becoming quite blustery, and snow was beginning to fall again.

"Will you have dinner with me some evening?"

"I don't think so, Leo."

"How about a drive in the country? No one would see us there."

"I'll have to think about it. I'm becoming confused again." And trembling again, I noticed.

She fought and pushed and scratched when I tried to kiss her. At first. But then she clung and bit and cried. Cold? Stuck-up? Aloof? Marble? God, you never know about a woman, do you? I was beginning to wonder if this was more woman than I could handle.

"It was awfully hard to avoid your eyes every time I saw you, Leo. I was so afraid you'd know. And now look what I've done. I've never stepped out of line before, and I mustn't now. I never should have kissed you. You know that, don't you?"

"I'm afraid I tend to disagree with you."

Two or three or four kisses later, I departed, with a promise to call in a few days. Jane would wonder why I was late, but I had a reserve of stories.

That weekend I did more chores around the house than I had done in years. Painted Kathy's bedroom, repaired the leaking pipe, waxed the car, cleaned the basement. My energy was boundless, and I knew I had to keep my mind off Violet at least until Monday. I tried, anyway. Jane thought I was acting rather strangely, but I told her "Pressures."

During the next few weeks, I saw Violet three times–dinner, drinks at the Roma, a drive in the country. The drive was well-planned to just happen to culminate at a little motel I knew of, but Violet refused. She still had feelings of guilt to cope with, and I tried to be patient. A goddamned emotional artistic creative woman is a hard thing for a man to deal with. It's really a lot to ask of a thirty-six year old kid who just wanted to spend his life playing football and screwing the willing little sluts who were always available.

Then one day near the end of March (Good Friday, God forbid), when the office had closed, unbeknown to Jane, and Violet was supposedly at church, we slipped away to Connecticut for the afternoon. The snow had melted, except for bits and pieces here and there, and yellow-green appeared faintly in the tops of the trees. The sky was the blue that heaven is supposedly made of and a few robins had already returned to the north to mate. I stopped the car at the end of a lane, and we headed back the path toward an abandoned barn. A stream nearby bubbled over the rocks; the spring thaw had filled it to its brim. The thaw was everywhere: in the stream, in the softening mud, in greening grass, in Violet. When I kissed her, I knew instinctively that the guilt was gone and the thaw was complete, and I was right. The woods was full of the chill breezes of spring, but the old barn was warm. And I never knew that dark, mysterious, reserved ballerinas were like that. In fact, I had never known any woman who was quite like that. I should have taken heed that first night I had kissed her, and she had trembled and clutched and bit and cried. That was *nothing* compared to that afternoon in the deserted barn. And after two hours there with her, I knew it was quite too late to take heed. We would be here again and again.

"When my little sophisticated dancer lets down her hair, she really lets down her hair, doesn't she?"

"I tried to warn you, Leo, but you wouldn't be warned."

Violet laughed much that afternoon, and her laughter, along with everything else, had been worth waiting for.

In fact, Violet laughed much all that spring the warm bubbly laugh of brooks and streams, the lyrical laugh of meadowlarks and wrens, the beautiful laughter of April days and children in May. I gave her gifts–stones we found by the stream, poems I'd written for her, my grandmother's tiny golden baby ring, and always–violets from the woods. I was no longer ashamed of being a poet at heart (in school I had written poems over the slightest occasions, and the other guys on the team had ridiculed me as the "Jingle Jock" and now poured all of my feelings onto bits of paper for Violet.

And now, my work really suffered, but I didn't care. And my home life went to pot, but I didn't care.

We loved all that summer, and it was the most beautiful of my life. We loved at the Plaza, at tiny motels outside New Haven, even in the parking lot at the shopping center. One time. But most of all, we loved in the Connecticut countryside, in the grass and the leaves, under God's beautiful and ever-changing skies of blue and grey and white and black. We took picnic lunches, but could never eat, went swimming, but never swam. (It was a good thing I had painted that room and waxed that car and fixed that plumbing in the winter, for it would never have gotten done that summer. NO WAY.) And as the weather drew warmer

and warmer, Violet, my cold, aloof ballerina, grew warmer and warmer also.

She began to tell me that she loved me, and it hurt me not to be able to tell her in return that I loved her. She wouldn't understand. Wouldn't understand that I had never really loved any woman, one was the same as another to me. How could I tell her this was just a little infatuation, a little thing I could get over if I wanted. I knew I could if I really tried. But she loved me, and I was sorry for her.

Then autumn came, and I was sorry for me. Autumn came like a great glacier, slipping slowly southward on the continent, changing colors and blowing leaves and chilling cheeks as it moved relentlessly onward. Children can never understand why autumn is my favorite time of year. For them it means back to school, boots to buckle, hats to lose, and no more swimming, no more snakes to catch. They cannot understand that autumn is the season of poets, of sentimentalists, of lovers, the season of fleeting beauty, the season of truth.

And that autumn I came to realize many things. That life and youth and beauty can blow away as swiftly as the leaves turn brown, blow away, and are forgotten. That there are some lovely ladies, pillars of marble, with hearts as warm and loving as evening campfires in October, who know more about life than I, who have wills of strength, but not of iron. That love comes to the best of us, if not in spring or summer, then at last in autumn. That little girls in pigtails grow taller, and ask less often, "Why don't you ever have time to play checkers with me anymore, Daddy?" That a man cannot have everything he wants. And that, perhaps, he should not try for everything he wants.

Too much truth to face, too much life to live began to affect me adversely. Half-truths had always been good enough for Leo before, and the whipped cream and the cherries skimmed from the top of life were all he cared to deal with. Real love and black-eyed ballerinas, broken lives and damaged hearts, painful ecstasies and divine anguishes: these were things for which the Great One was ill-prepared. I tried to push the agony of the ultimate decision from my mind, from my life. Could I divorce the wife who had put me through college, borne my four children, three living and one now decreased, endured my mother, washed my stinking socks and smiled through all my moods? Could I say "So long, kiddies, it's been nice knowing you. Go find yourself a new Daddy."? How could I, in the other hand, say "Bye-bye Violet, it was fun."? Maybe, for a little longer, I could hang on to both worlds.

But more and more I came to know that I could not spend a few hours a week with my lovely loving Violet. I wanted to be more a part of her. I wanted to live with her, and that could not be. It was becoming deeper and deeper, and disaster was imminent.

No longer would the poetry fall from my pen, books became pages filled with blurs. My headaches became frequent, almost constant. Nausea overwhelmed me, and wild thoughts filled my mind, thoughts that frightened me, thoughts of passports to Lisbon, survival in the Yukon, guns or pills, carbon monoxide or driving over a cliff, alone or in a dramatic death tryst.

It was while Violet was dancing on the West Coast that I blacked out while driving on the freeway one evening, and spent three days in the hospital for tests. Jane told the doctors I had been acting strangely, and I knew that was a rather kind understatement. I almost hoped they would find something wrong with my heart—perhaps I'd be an invalid—that would be a way out. But the doctors and the tests found nothing that was any great revelation to me: The man is under great emotional strain, difficult time in his life, needs a good rest.

And so I was sent home to rest and to agonize some more. I erupted violently at anyone who entered my bedroom door, and so I came to be left alone. The thinking was worse than death, but I knew it had to be done. The painful, protracted labors finally gave birth to the realization of the root of the problem and the only decision that could be made.

Violet returned in mid-November and that Saturday, a cold and blustery preview of the months to come, I took her to our barn in the country. We buried ourselves in a fortress of old woolen blankets and warm granny quilts, and made beautiful, beautiful love, but she could sense that I had something to tell her.

"What's wrong, Honey?"

"I've made a decision," I said. "I love you."

"My God, Baby, it took you long enough to get around to telling me. So what's so bad about that?"

"I love you. Please understand. I've never loved anyone before. But because I love you, I have to give you up."

"Why, Leo, why? Why?"

"Because, Dear, I have a wife who is good to me, whom I promised to support, who knows nothing but the world of being my wife and the mother of my kids. And because, Dear, I have three kids who need a father three kids who often ask why I'm gone so often, and where I go. And because I never should have looked at your black eyes, your fabulous legs. I didn't think it would turn out like this; I was wrong. You were right in fighting it. I regret that I got you into this mess because of my selfishness, but you'll get over it. You'll have to. I'm sorry, Violet."

"My God, my God, my God." Violet cried now as I had never seen a woman cry. "And what about you? Will you get over it?"

"Right now, I don't feel like I ever will, but I'll try. You're a part of me now, Violet, and that much I can never change."

"I used to think that my life was one big, lonely heartache, Honey, but I didn't know what anguish was then. I guess I knew all along we were just pretending it could go on forever. But I thank you, thank you, thank you, Baby, for the time we had together. At least for nine months, I was alive. You've given me the greatest gift of all, Leo."

An hour or two later, as we headed back south to Scarsdale, flurries of snow began to whirl around our car. Were they new flurries of a new winter, never used before, or had they survived millions of cycles through the ages? Had they been covered with soot and pushed against the buildings of Manhattan last February? Did it matter? Did any of it really matter? Was life itself going to matter anymore now?

I took Violet to her car, and she left for her home. She had never said another word during the drive. She squeezed my hand and kissed me, then rushed from the car.

Several times during the next weeks and months, Violet would call me at the office, or "happen" to see me grocery shopping. She begged me to be with her once more, but I told her what I now had grown up enough to know: that "once more" would never work.

Now she has given up her dancing, I hear and sits at home alone, staring from her window. She never calls me anymore. She never cries to me or begs me to be with her "once more."

Jane never knew, or at least I don't think she ever knew. Suspected, maybe. But knew, I don't think so. Can she tell that there is a hole in my life, in my heart? Perhaps.

Last week, I took Jane and the girls to the supermarket. She was there.

Hello, Leo, Jane. Nice to see you again. How have you been?

Oh, fine. And you?

All right. My, how your children have grown.

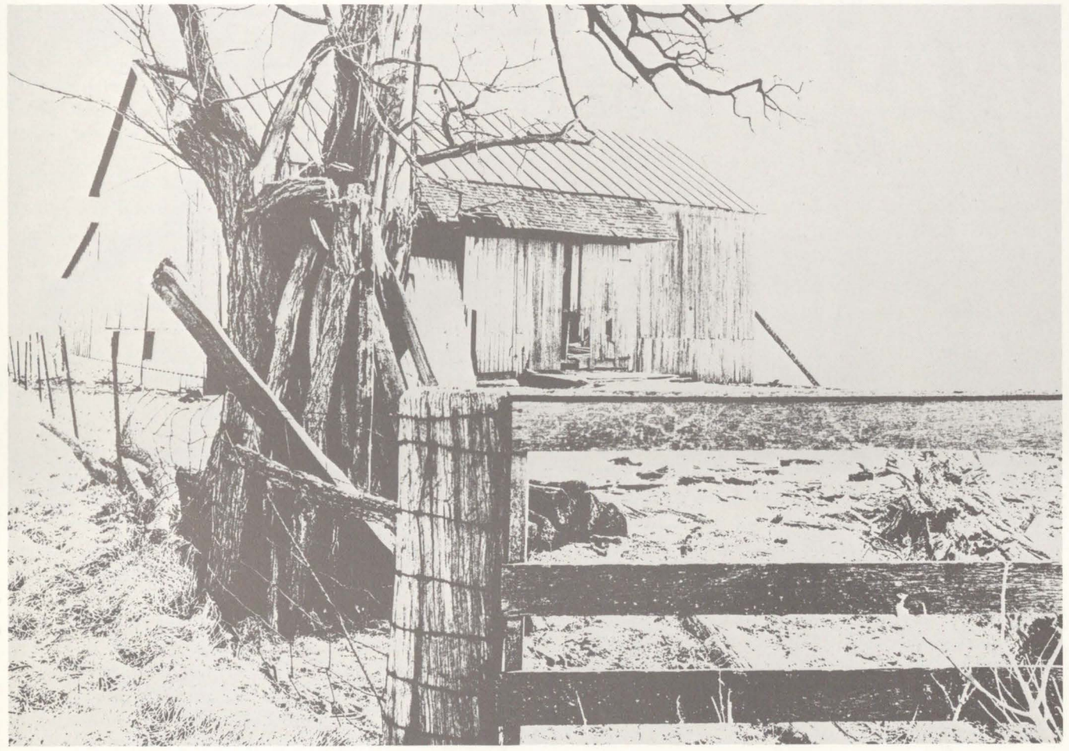
Yes, and they don't care much for grocery shopping anymore, but they wanted to come so they could choose their own cookies and cereal.

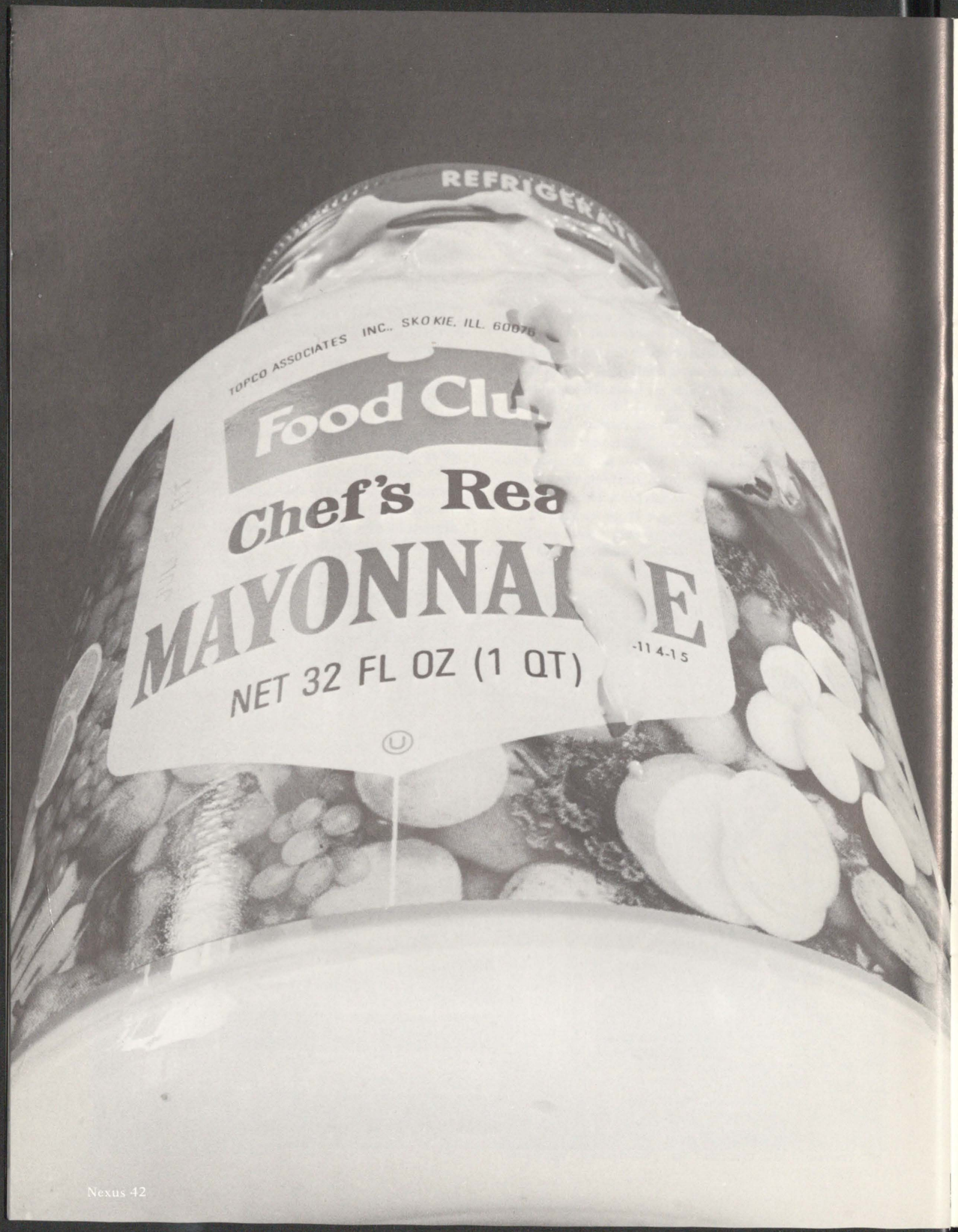
I prefer to shop alone.

Oh, I always make Leo come with me. Well, we must be hurrying along. have to pick up Brian at football practice. Come to see us sometime, OK, Violet?

Sure.

God, what have I wrought?





Still Another Story About Mayonnaise

by Bruce Pilgrim

Max was waiting for the bus on a Monday in the middle of the fourteenth coldest winter in history. He stood facing the wind, reasoning that it was futile to try and beat the icy air.

The lady sitting on the bench had a large shopping bag with her. It contained what appeared to be a shotgun. She was staring at Max.

He was used to being stared at. Short, slightly hump-backed, he looked like anyone's mental picture of a pervert. Add to this his dartboard face and the thin hair escaping his hat in every direction. Not to mention the buttons.

All over the front of his overcoat Max wore small metal campaign buttons. They had been painted over and reprinted. The buttons said things like "Hi!", "How are you?", "What time is it?", and "You're so right.". It saved Max a lot of talking. Most of the time he merely had to point to a combination of buttons to get through a conversation.

Most people thought he was a mute and avoided communication with him. Max's public appearances were relatively pleasant, consequently.

He walked through the employee's entrance into the shop. "The shop" made popsickle sticks for use in quiscently frozen confections or arts and craft projects. It was the largest factory of its kind in the world, employing over fifty people.

Max liked his job. He ran the counting machine. He'd sort the sticks and place them in a metal magazine which fed them through the counter. At intervals of 500, he'd make a small x with a special marking pencil. The sticks would move along a conveyor to Dobbs, who packed them into boxes. It was a well co-ordinated operation.

There were two ten minute breaks and one half-hour lunch period in Max's working day. He always sat with Dobbs and listened to him. Dobbs was 51 years old and crazy. The other employees left Max and Dobbs to themselves.

"No shit, Max, it's gonna happen. All this puhlootion and everthin' is gonna affect the lunchmeat in our country. It'll come alive and learn to reproduce itself. Everywhere yo look there'll be huge mounds of pressed ham, pimento loaf, and baloney. Baloney'll be the boss of all lunchmeat. And it'll keep growin' until it smothers the human race. That'll be the end . . . other day I found two pounds of garlic baloney in my icebox. I don't even like baloney, Max. But I got an idea and tried spredin' stuff on it. Mustard, ketchup, butter, all kinds a stuff. Only thing that worked was mayonnaise. It neutralizes lunchmeat. That's our only weapon Max. Now I always carry some mayonnaise with me. In case of lunchmeat."

Max always walked home from work. He liked to look around at the city, as a disinterested observer. It was a relatively beautiful day. The sun was nearly alone in the sky and was battling the wind for temperature control.

She was sitting on someone's front lawn. Very young, no more than 14, she was pretty in an odd sort of way. Long red hair surrounded a sad face, much older than the rest of her.

"Hey, man. You got any spare change?"

Max pointed to a "No" button.

"Oh I . . . You're a mute, aren't you?"

Again he pointed at the "No" button.

"Ok. You're just weird then."

"Yes" button.

"Far out. Hey, do you know a place where I can crash tonight? I'm going to Detroit to see my sister but I don't have bus fare."

Max pointed to his apartment. The girl got up and followed him.

His apartment was on the first floor of the building. He held the door for her and locked it after him. The room was full of chairs. At least two dozen chairs were scattered around the rooms. Beach chairs, dining room chairs, Morris chairs, arranged in small clusters, set apart or just lying overturned.

They both sat down. It seemed the obvious thing to do. The girl selected a large yellow butterfly chair and Max sat on the arm of his easy chair. They looked at each other, then at the chairs. Max picked up a pool cue and set up a small corkboard with some more speech buttons on it.

"Why do you have so many chairs? You have a lot of guests?"

"No" button.

"Like chairs?"

"Yes" button.

Silence for a while.

"My name is Carolyn. I ran away from home in San Antonio. My father beat me a lot. I'm going to live with my sister in Detroit . . . I"

Max pointed to a "really?" button.

"No. My name is Randy. And I'm not from San Antonio. I'm from St. Louis and I ran away from home because my mom wouldn't let me get married. But my boyfriend left me in Illinois and stole all my money. I've been hitching my way to New York. Gonna be a model. Start a new life."

Again the "really?" button.

"No. Hey, does it make any difference?"

"No" button.

"Can I have something to eat? I'm really hungry. Mister . . . what's your name anyway?"

"Max. Do you like garlic baloney?"

"Yeah. Hey, you really can talk."

"Yes" button.

Max made her a sandwich, putting plenty of mayonnaise on it, just in case. She ate it quickly, along with three more. Max read the newpaper, starting from the last page and working his way forward.

"Why do you read like that?"

"Good news is always on the last page. 'Boy found in wilderness after ten days.' Then comes the comics, classified ads, society page, editorials, sports and finally the front page. It gets steadily worse. On the front page there's a story about a guy who killed himself drilling eight holes in his head."

"Far out. He was still alive with seven holes in his head."

They laughed. Max had one of those silent laughs. His whole face became animated and his mouth opened, but there was no sound. Carolyn or Randy laughed in short bursts, punctuated by gasps.

"I'm not going to sleep with you, Max. So, if you want I'll leave."

Max frowned and shook his head.

"Ok. Just wanted to make sure."

That night she slept with him.

The morning brought another newspaper. Max read it backwards while Carolyn or Randy slept in. He wrote her a note explaining where things were and that he was going to work. He left her an extra key.

Dobbs was in a bad mood. That meant rambling conversation.

"This worl', Max, is in a mess . . . remember when I was in the Wobblies and they came to get us once . . . fuckin' women they never did do me any good . . ."

Max wasn't listening. It was hard to tell when Max was listening to Dobbs because he never responded and Dobbs expected no response. Dobbs was crazy.

Max was trying to remember how old he was. He was born in the early thirties. That meant he was 37 or 39. But his birthday wouldn't stand still. It kept jumping back and forth two years. He finally settled on 39, arbitrarilly. If Carolyn or Randy was 14, that left 25 years. In 25 years you could almost make two Carolyns or Randys and most of one Max.

When he got home, Carolyn or Randy was gone. She had left the key, but no note. The chairs had been re-arranged. Two dining room chairs stacked together, restaurant style. There was a small sign on the floor which said "Sex." Two beach chairs were placed back to back in the center of the room. On one of them was a sign that said Carolyn. On the other was a sign that said Randy. His easy chair was labeled Max. The corkboard was facing a neat row of chairs. The sign said "school."

Max sat in his chair, tracing the ends of the ceiling with his pool cue. He read the evening paper frontwards. The last page had a story about a five year old girl who had a miscarriage.

Max got out a campaign button. "Eleanor start packing, the Wilkee's are coming." He painted it white. When it dried he wrote very carefully with a black felt pen.

"No, I don't have any spare change."

The Taxeaters

by Lester Keeney

Flame, smoke, and furious sound bellowed out from the water cooled launching pad as communication satellite, Master 1, riding atop a Saturn rocket split the low hanging clouds.

In the blockhouse at mission control, tense men at consoles, blinking red and green lights, and rolling tapes watched the rocket run a flawless course, and go into parking orbit. If all went well, in three days the satellite would be lofted to a pre-determined position 24,000 miles above the earth.

Engineer Jack Moody, turned to his partner on the console and said, "It was a good bird, John."

"Yes, it was, Jack, and I say good riddance. That thing was getting scary. It was the nearest thing to a human brain we've ever had around here."

"Did you feel that too? I've heard others say the same thing."

"Jack, I was in the assembly room when they connected it to the power line for a test. It came alive and I mean alive. It dominated everything and everybody in that room."

"You need a rest, John, you've been working too hard on this project."

"Maybe I have. But you know what the scientists and technicians called that thing, don't you?"

"Sure, but that is a natural reaction to the fact that the satellite will control every Comsat. in orbit, including what the Russians have up. Its official name is Master 1. Don't you think it's a little presumptuous to call it God?"

"I don't know, Jack, at this stage, I don't know. It almost seemed as if the thing was telling us what we should call it."

"Aw, come off that, John, you're a scientist not a superstitious old woman."

"Maybe so, maybe so."

A buzzer called the men's attention back to their consoles to remind them that something had gone wrong. The satellite was going into a higher orbit on its own. No command from the control center had been made; nor had the automatic system aboard given such a signal. In the next two hours it had parked itself in the very synchronous orbit that had been planned for it, but three days early.

Jack looked at John with apprehension on his face. "I can't believe it. I saw it and I still can't believe it."

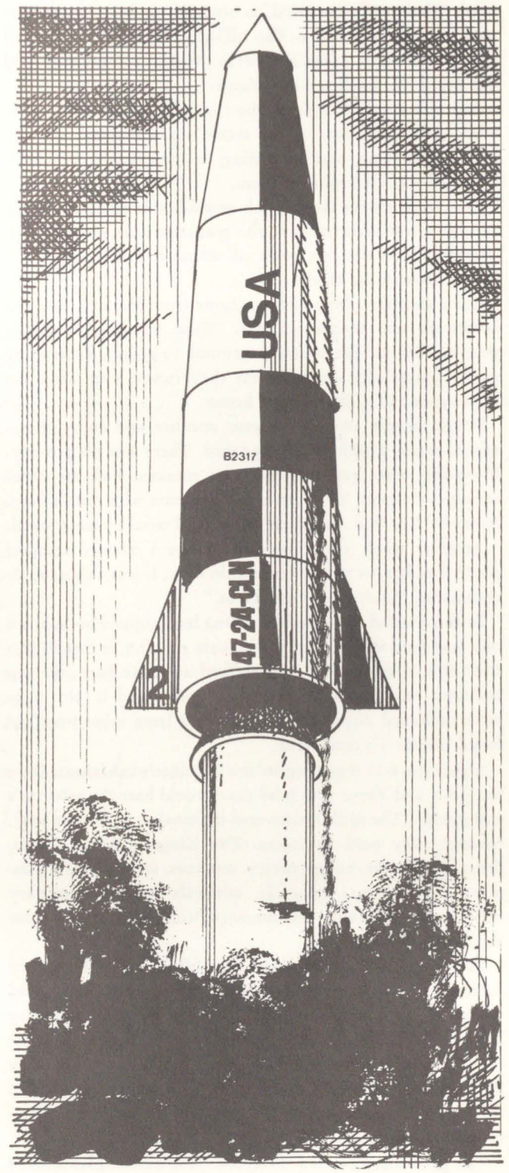
John had a look of fear on his face.

Central control was mystified. All systems were in perfect condition. Not one rocket on the satellite had been fired. No one could explain why it acted as it did. The press was told that the mission had gone so well that it was decided to complete it three days earlier than scheduled.

The next day things were very hectic around mission control. The tests on Master 1 were not going well. In fact, they were not going at all. Master 1 refused to answer commands, and would not accept messages or TV signals. More ominous was the discovery that all communication satellites, both ours and the Russians', had quit working.

The hot line between Washington and Moscow began to warm up. The Russians were demanding an explanation, and had placed their armed forces on alert for a possible attack by the United States.

The President of the United States went on TV and assured the world that we ourselves did not know what was going on. He implied that it was possible a third world power was involved and would be exposed as soon as our scientists were sure.



Suddenly, a message beamed out from Master 1. It was a silent call direct to the brain of billions of people on the earth. Only a small percentage didn't hear it. It was a command. It simply stated: "Store food!"

The people who heard the message began to act like ants. There was no panic, no hoarding or stealing. Everybody very methodically began to store food. If one had too much he divided with someone who lacked. In Viet Nam and along the Suez Canal soldiers who had been shooting at one another laid down their arms and began to divide their food. Their officiers tried to stop them, but the soldiers paid them no attention. The officers could not understand what was taking place and were afraid, because they had not heard the satellite's command.

Lights burned all night in the capital buildings around the world as the leaders of the world's governments tried to understand what was happening to their people, and why they had lost control over them.

In a week all the food in the world had been divided. The supermarkets were empty, the granaries were cleaned out, everything to the last grain of wheat had been stored in homes around the earth.

Then another silent message came from Master 1 into the brains of the people. It said, "Stop working," and the people obeyed. All industry ground to a halt, except the power plants; for some reason they ran on even after the employees had quit and gone home.

People began to talk to one another and enjoy themselves; racial problems disappeared. There was no poverty. Everyone who heard Master 1's message had the same amount of food. They even fed the ones who didn't hear, because they had stored no food, and would have starved.

Another week went by, and Master 1 beamed another silent message to those who could hear. It was a short terse command: "Don't pay your taxes."

In the United States withholding had stopped because no one was working. In Cuba, peasants standing in line to pay their few pesos turned and walked away. In Peru, the tax collector went back to his office and closed it. No taxes were collected anywhere in the world from those who had heard Master 1's command.

A pattern was emerging in the Satellite's behaviour. Only the poor and those who paid taxes could hear the satellite's commands. The millionaires and billionaires could not hear, because they paid no taxes. The Kings, dictators, presidents, governors, congressmen, senators, members of parliaments, bureaucrats, generals, admirals and other military officers did not hear the message from Master 1 because they were taxeaters.

The taxeaters became more alarmed than ever. They paid themselves out of their country's gold reserves, but it did no good. The money would not buy anything, and they found themselves at the mercy of the people because there was no food sold anywhere. They began to threaten the people, and when that didn't work they cajoled. But the people stood firm. They would not work and they refused to pay taxes.

The generals screamed that the ammunition plants were not making shells and bombs. There was no fuel for their B52's. Their fighter planes couldn't get off the ground for lack of parts. The admirals cried about their aircraft carriers and battleships lying in port or drifting helplessly for want of fuel or men to man them. Where is your patriotism, they asked? But the people didn't answer.

The congressmen and the senators said the commies were taking over. The bosses in the Soviet Union said the capitalists were taking over, but the Americans and the Russians ignored them and remained firm.

Fidel Castro went on TV for five hours, but no one saw or heard him, for the people were out dancing in the streets. They had sensed a newborn feeling of freedom from want and the fear of war.

President Nixon went on TV again to make one thing perfectly clear. But the people were not moved, and the President felt a fear he had not known before; a fear of the unknown. He turned to his advisors, but they too were taxeaters and could not hear Master 1. They could not help him.

At mission control, the top brass called in the press to admit that the satellite was an apparent failure, and that they could not say why. When the reporters asked if the strange happenings in the world were caused by the satellite, the top brass pooh-poohed the idea. "The satellite is dead. It has not functioned at all. It cannot influence anybody or anything at anytime. There seems to be a wave of mass hysteria engulfing the world at this time. We believe it will resolve itself in a week or two." With these statements the top brass closed the interview.

Meanwhile, the taxeaters in all the governments of the world were meeting together to discuss the actions of their people, and find means of forcing them to go back to work and pay taxes. When that was done they would order the soldiers to pick up their arms and start fighting again. To the taxeaters it was the simple problem of survival. They must have taxes and they must have bloody wars.

Master 1 rode serenely in the sky and waited until the taxeaters had made their final plans. They had decided to man the guns and planes and warships and turn them on the people.

Then the final message from Master 1 that only the taxeaters heard: "Stop!"

The taxeaters heard and hesitated, but their brains were so programmed to violence and war and the luxury of living off the people's labor that it was impossible for them to obey.

Up in Master 1, computers clicked and hummed; devastating power was drawn from the Sun, and beamed to the earth.

The taxeaters began to feel an unbearable pain in their heads as their brains began to get warm, then hot, and they fell to the ground. Steam and smoke came from their ears and nostrils as their brains cooked to nothingness.

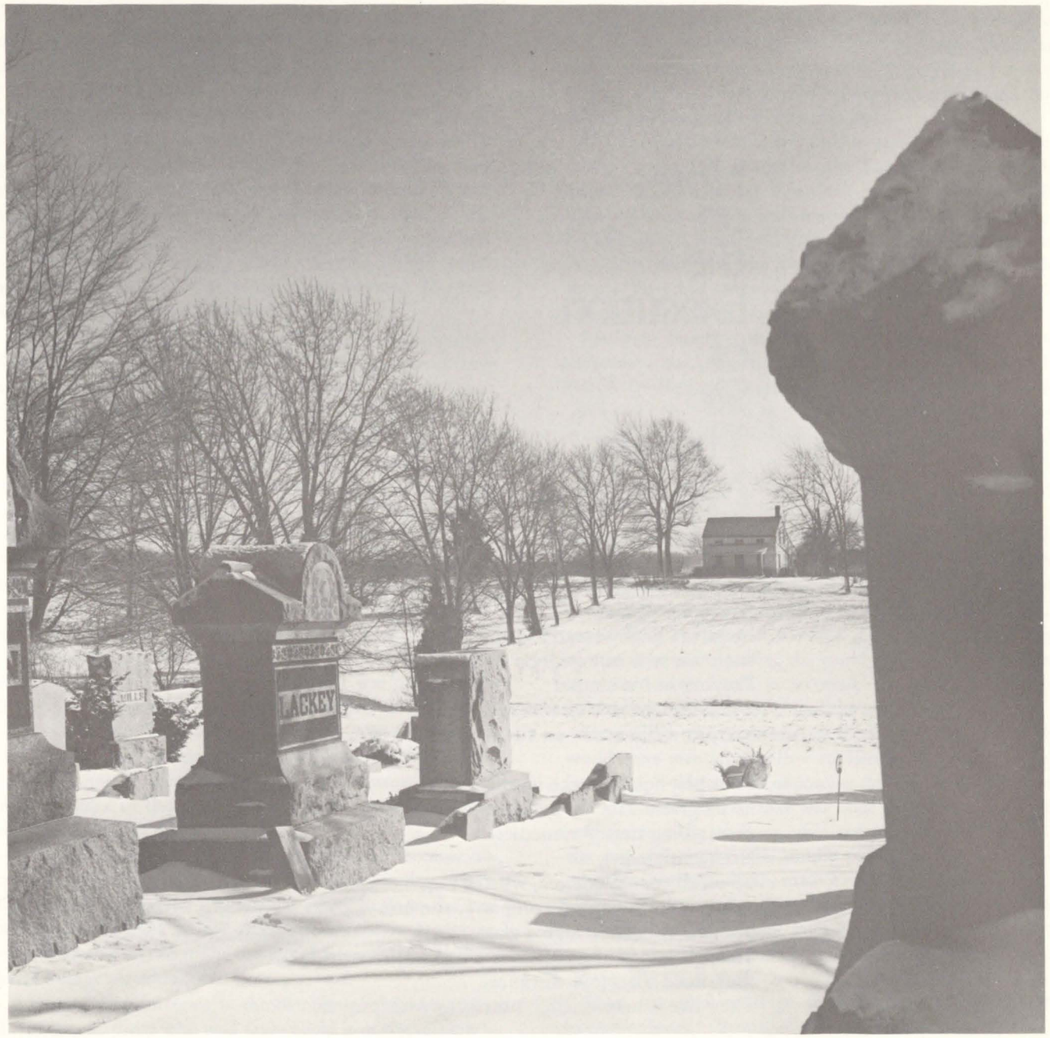
At mission control, Jack Moody shook his sleeping partner awake to watch the blinking consoles tell them that all was well with Master 1. It was ready to obey commands from mission control. All systems were go.

Notes on the Execution of Sir Thomas More

by Cecile Williamson Cary

More knew the flesh
as the student knows anatomy.
He wore a hair shirt as reminder of his own.
At his execution,
his short neck served as subject for a jest—
such wit was not entirely human.
Praying in his chapel
when daughter Meg was sick,
he found the cure—an enema.

Poet-physician to the world,
he diagnosed its ills in Latin prose,
prescribing merry remedies.
No hermit saint,
he cared for daughters, wife King,
country home, good company, the arts—
but saw them through a glass.
Though saints of government live in the world,
they need a certain distance.
They live where enema intersects with prayer.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